**A "Gender in practice" Community of Practice Factsheet**

# Masculinity

## I – Introduction

The objective of this paper is to better understand the notion of masculinity and its implications for development projects from the perspective of transforming power relations between men and women towards greater equality and equity. It is our hope that international cooperation organizations (ICOs) recognize the pertinence of integrating the notion of masculinity into their programming and envisage actions on this issue in their development projects. This paper is meant to be a practical tool serving as a point of departure for integrating this notion into ICOs. It came out of a training workshop given by Nicolas Vonarx[1], an expert on masculinity, on April 10-11, 2014. This workshop was organized by CECI, in collaboration with AQOCI's *Comité québécois femmes et développement* (Quebec Committee for Women and Development—CQFD), as part of their "GE Community of practice" project, which is funded by the IDRC.

Although much remains to be done, the struggle for gender equality has produced undeniable advances. This struggle has also opened the door to new ideas on addressing these issues, which, however, have been little explored to date. For example, men have long been absent in GE studies and infrequently targeted by GE interventions. And yet, there is a growing body of research showing that if men are included in GE interventions, they too can contribute to transforming unequal gender relations. Moreover, this does not imply any contradictions between working *with* men and working *on* masculinity and a feminist vision of women's empowerment.

Since the dawn of the new millennium, the subject has become more visible in publications such as the journal *Gender and Development* (2013). Furthermore, growing numbers of organizations

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are addressing this aspect of GE issues. Furthermore, it is apparent that organizations are starting to work with men in this area in certain development projects (Vonarx, 2014). The door is now open. The next step is to become informed, acquire the necessary tools and elaborate new approaches, conceptually and operationally, to promote the successful integration of the notion of masculinity into the programming of ICOs.

The object of this paper is to explore this set of issues. Section two contains a brief overview of the notion of masculinity. In section three, we discuss examples of good practices in masculinity related interventions in programming, as well as at the institutional level. Finally, in section four we present the principal resources at the reader's disposal.

## II – Elements concerning the notion of masculinity

Gender inequalities persist worldwide. As do situations of women's subordination to men. Equality is a fundamental human right. There is not a single society where women enjoy the same rights as men. At all levels, social, political, economic and cultural, it's necessary to improve the status and position of women in order to transform unequal gender relations.

*Masculinity as a gender identity*

Gender relations pose the basic question, among others, of what distinguishes men and women socially, i.e., the question of masculine and feminine identities. Working on masculinity does not imply inventing a new approach. Rather, the issue is to integrate working on masculinity into the gender equality (GE) approach with a view to transforming unequal gender relations.

Masculinity as an expression of gender identity is not a product of biology. It is a social and historical construction, influenced by characteristics such as age, ethnic origin, socio-professional status and religion. It varies in accordance with social and cultural contexts. It is expressed in different ways in different places and evolves over time. It is, in effect, in constant flux.

Masculinity may be defined as "an identity or an individual's sense of being a man as determined by what one knows about this gender and what one's society says on this subject" (Vonarx, 2014). Masculinity is constructed as a function of different social references. Masculinity characterizes men – and the roles they must play in a society or a social group, their ways of being, of living certain experiences, of behaving in different situations, of fitting into an environment, of experiencing their emotions, etc. Masculinity is seen as a conception of identity that determines whether one feels like a real man or not.

"Dominant" masculinity, so-called, is associated with attributes considered as predominantly male characteristics, i.e., physical strength, emotional self-control, aggression, courage, intelligence, power, etc. However, these traits are not exclusive to men, as they are also found in women. That said, they are supposedly predominant among men.

The adoption of certain behaviours connected with dominant masculinity is problematic as these behaviours negatively affect the living conditions and well-being of both women and men and prejudice the adoption of healthy and egalitarian gender relations. Said problematic characteristics include: violent behaviour by men, notably with regard to women; men's domination of women on both the personal and social planes; the limited role men play in children's education; and their perception of invulnerability in relation to sickness and the

resultant lack of responsible behaviour in terms of health (e.g., in relation to the transmission of HIV-AIDS).

Finally, it must be remembered that masculinity embodies a power relation and masculine domination is also exercised against other men, particularly those who find it difficult to conform perfectly to the "ideal" dominant model, which is generally unattainable.

*How does one address the issue of masculinity?*

In order to better understand the construction of this gender identity and the reasons behind the adoption of associated behaviours, which are prejudicial to the health and well-being of women and men, we advocate examining what defines a man socially. How is a man (socially) constructed? How does one become a man? How does a man recognize that he is a man? What are the experiences, behaviours and attitudes that allow him to demonstrate his adherence to this identity and what are the norms and criteria that perpetuate the construction thereof?

How a man sees women – his perception of their social role, characteristics, rights, representation as sex objects, etc. – influences his relations with them. Consequently, we need to examine masculinity as an <u>object to be deconstructed</u> – with groups of men and with groups of women – to identify said object's weaknesses, contradictions and problems so as to modify the representations that contribute to the behaviours that prejudice the adoption of egalitarian gender relations (Vonarx, 2014).

Moreover, working on masculinity implies identifying and demonstrating the advantages to men -- should they modify their behaviour by adopting alternative models of masculinity. The social norms related to dominant masculinity restrict men to certain social roles (provider, leader, authority figure, absentee child educator, etc.), which sometimes prevents them from fully realizing their human potential in other areas. For example, allowing women to make a greater economic contribution to their households would support men in their dominant role as providers and reduce the pressures intrinsic to it. Certain men may experience significant difficulties and contradictions in constructing their identity as a function of the dominant model of masculinity. They are in effect forced to construct their identity as men based on certain dominant masculinity type references. If these men stray from these dominant references of identity, they are quickly called to order and made to pay the consequences, which may go as far as discrimination and exclusion. It is to men's advantage to question the model!

*Why work with men?*

According to Michael Kaufman, there are a number of reasons suggesting why positive results arise from the participation of men and boys in the struggle against the dominant established order (Kaufman, 2003):

- Some men wish for better relations with the women who share their lives.
- Some men may wish to break free from the strong man model of dominant masculinity and its negative consequences on their quality of life.
- Changes in men's attitudes towards women produce real improvements in the living conditions of women and their communities.
- Some men share the values of social justice and equality. By working with men, it's possible to counter the stereotypes suggesting that men are incapable of empathy and commitment in with respect to gender equality.

- Many men are in positions of power. Therefore, potentially, they could play important roles in the process of transforming gender relations. They can either resist changes in favour of equality or speed their progress. They dispose of important resources (economic, political and social) that they can mobilize in favour of the GE approach, should they choose to do so.
- Working with men also makes it possible to identify and isolate men who are resistant to change and refuse to work in favour of equality, initially, and then subsequently find the appropriate approach to sensitize them and convince them to change their minds.

*Working **with** and **on** men*

Working on masculinity, that is to say working with men on the process of constructing their identity, does not imply ceasing to work specifically with women. Nor does it deprive women of resources necessary to tackle certain issues that affect their living conditions and maintain them in situations of unequal relations (domestic violence, reproductive health issues, etc.). Working on masculinity implies conceiving of men as potential strategic allies in the work of transforming gender relations. This is about a women's empowerment process, in which one works *with* and *on* men, in order to transform gender relations towards equality and equity.

**III – A look at good practices**

*Some general considerations in our development approaches*

- Stop considering men as the problem. Instead, see them as an integral part of the solution and treat them accordingly.

- Identify specific outreach strategies for men and by men, based on their experiences. Analyze the masculine condition to understand how it influences the adoption of behaviour prejudicial to men's health and their well-being or that of their families, spouses and children. Focus in particular on what characterizes and conditions their experiences and practices.

- In addressing the notion of masculinity, do not use terms that blame men to avoid having this notion labeled with an *a priori* negative connotation. That said, it is necessary to question the power relations between men and women that produce many inequalities for women. In other words, rather than attack men as members of the male gender, endeavour to break with the *gendered* behaviours that maintain the inequalities we are struggling against.

- Examine the process whereby young boys come to appropriate the dominant model of masculinity as their own and analyze said model's implications regarding the production of inequalities.

- Working with men alone, as well as working with men and women together, identify and construct alternative models of masculinity to the dominant model.

- Put the emphasis on sensitization and training aimed at changes in behaviour by vaunting the merits of alternative models of masculinity.

- Work in particular with young men and young women, as well as girls and boys, as they are more open and likely to be receptive to change.

*At the institutional level*

- Train the staff of ICOs to increase their understanding of the notion of masculinity and to encourage an environment of openness that will facilitate questioning of the cornerstones of the dominant masculine identity and promote the flowering of a shared vision of alternative models of masculinity. Focus in particular on <u>involving men</u> in this process and identify ones who could play leadership roles on this file.

- Establish links with organizations capable of promoting this process, both internally and with local organizations in programming countries, and develop a community of practice among the ICOs working on this question.

- In the field, work in collaboration with mobilized and informed organizations capable of really implanting changes even as they consider the local context, thereby ensuring enhanced local ownership and implementation. Certain men's organizations are already active in this area, including *l'Association des hommes dévoués* in Haiti, *Promundo* in Brazil and *Rwandrec* in Rwanda (see section IV "Resources"). It would be a good idea to develop links with such organizations and their networks.

- Ensure that the masculinity file is an institutional priority of the ICO, one which it undertakes to progressively integrate into its programming through practical actions. To this end, the following steps would be useful:

  o Identify a man in charge of the file at the ICO who is mandated to advocate in favour of interventions on masculinity within the organization.
  o Inform and train ICO staff (e.g., program officers) on masculinity and its implications re programs and empower them to integrate this notion into their respective projects.
  o Adopt, for example, a one-year action plan on masculinity, including activities such as creating a staff discussion forum on masculinity and proposing initial interventions in the form of pilot projects (especially re projects in the start-up phase); identify and train a field resource person (a man) in charge of this file in relation to the pilot projects selected.
  o Assess progress after a year of working on the question and document the knowledge acquired for future use.

*At the programming level*

- Develop an educational approach on masculinity appropriate to the social and cultural context of the programming country and region, and also to the partner organization's organizational context.

- Develop ways to link and <u>not keep separate</u> the work of women's empowerment with the work *on* and *with* men. Ensuring such connections amounts to linking up two sides to one and the same approach to gender equality. Thus, depending on the area of intervention, one may work more with women or more with men or with both together. For example, in order to increase men's involvement in childcare and education or their participation in domestic labour, one may endeavour to sensitize them and work with them to change their views on these questions and gradually lead them to change their roles. The resources serving to fund projects that include such activities do not benefit men only; they also serve to advance progress towards equality, to the benefit of women and girls (Kaufman, 2003: 1).

- Work with young men because they are in the process of constructing their identities and, perhaps, working out new references that will shape their identity as men. Experience shows they are more open and susceptible to adopting different models of masculinity.

- Work with women and girls on the ways they internalize the standard model of masculinity. As important agents of socialization and the transmission of elements of identity, they participate in the reproduction of dominant masculinity. It's important to work with them on alternative models of masculinity.

- Inside partner organizations in the field, the strategy of cascade training on masculinity by peer educators has proven successful. First, qualified facilitators are trained. They in turn train and provide tools to peer educators. The latter then proceed, in their respective milieu or community, to facilitate discussion meetings with young men (or young women, as the case may be) on different aspects of masculinity identified as problematic. Male peer educators represent models of positive masculinity and can serve as role models (see for example the training manual "Training facilitators and peer educators on masculinity and HIV-AIDS in Haiti," used during PALIH 2, a project executed by CCISD and CECI).

## IV – RESOURCES

**The notion of masculinity: Research, think pieces and literature reviews.**

BHANDRI, Neha. *Strategies and Tools for working with Men and Boys to end Violence against Girls, Boys, Women and other Men*. UNIFEM and SAVE THE CHILDREN, 2004. On line: http://www.iwtc.org/ideas/18_strategies.pdf

BRIDGE. *Engaging Men in Gender Equality: Positive Strategies and Approaches. Overview and Annotated Bibliography.* Institute of Development Studies, 2006. On line: http://www.bridge.ids.ac.uk/reports/BB15Masculinities.pdf

CONSEIL DU STATUT DE LA FEMME. *La participation des hommes et des garçons: nécessaire, mais pas à n'importe quel prix*. Research paper, 2011. On line: http://www.csf.gouv.qc.ca/modules/fichierspublications/fichier-32-1280.pdf

*Gender and Development*, Vol. 21, N° 1: *Working with men on gender equality*, Oxfam GB, 2013. On line: http://www.genderanddevelopment.org/page/working-with-men-issue

*Gender and Development*, Vol. 5, N° 2: *Men and masculinity*, Oxfam GB, 1997. On line: http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/search?q=*;q1=publications;q2=Gender%20%26%20Development%20Volume%205%20Issue%202;x1=page_type;x2=journal

KAUFMAN, Michael. *Cadre d'action pour faire participer les hommes et les garçons à l'avancement de l'égalité entre les sexes et à l'élimination de la discrimination et de la violence à l'endroit des femmes et des filles*. 2003. On line: http://www.michaelkaufman.com/articles/

KAUFMAN, Michael. *Los hombres, el feminismo y las experiencias contradictorias del poder entre los hombres.* Revised version of the article "Men, Feminism and Men's Contradictory Experiences of Power," published by Harry Brod and Michael Kaufman *in Theorizing Masculinities.* Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications, 1994. On line: http://www.michaelkaufman.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/12/los-hombres-el-feminismo-y-las-experiences-contradictorias-del-poder-entre-los-hombres.pdf

LWAMBO, Desiree. *'Before the War, I was a Man': Men and Masculinities in Eastern DR Congo.* Heal Africa, Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2011. On line: http://www.healafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/men-and-masculinities-in-eastern-dr-congo.pdf

MALIK, Bela, Lena KARLSSON and Ravi KARKARA. *Working with men and boys to promote gender equality and to end violence against boys and girls. Methods, strategies, tools and practices.* Workshop report. Save the Children, Sweden-Denmark, 2005. On line: http://wocan.org/sites/drupal.wocan.org/files/SCS_Regional_Workshop_Report_March_2004_Long2.pdf

PROMUNDO. *Impliquer les hommes pour prévenir la violence basée sur le genre: une étude multi-pays des interventions et d'évaluation d'impact*. Promundo (coordination), ICRW, Culturasalud, Centre for Health and Social Justice, Rwandan Men's Resource Center, in collaboration with The MenEngage Alliance, 47 pages. On line: http://www.promundo.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/UNT_Frn_5.pdf

PROMUNDO and ICRW. *Men who Care: A multi-country Qualitative Study of Men in Non-Traditional Caregiving Roles*, 2012. On line: http://www.promundo.org.br/en/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Men-Who-Care.pdf

RICARDO, Christine and Gary BARKER. Men, *Masculinities, Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Violence. A Literature Review and Call for Action*. Promundo and MenEngage, 2008. On line: http://www.hapinternational.org/pool/files/ricardobarkermenmasculinitiessexualexploitationsexual violence.pdf

ROBERT, Anne-Marie Thimothée. *Étude de cas Masculinité*. Project to support the fight against STIs/HIV-AIDS in Haiti (PALIH 2). CCISD and CECI, 2011.

SLEGH, Henny, Gary BARKER, Augustin KIMONYO, Prudence NDOLIMANA and Matt BANNERMAN. "'I can do women's work': reflections on engaging men as allies in women's economic empowerment in Rwanda," *in Gender and Development*, Oxfam GB, Vol. 21, N$^o$ 1, p. 15-30, 2013. On line: http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/13552074.2013.767495

SWEETMAN, Caroline. "Introduction: Working with men on gender equality," *in Gender and Development*, Oxfam GB, Vol. 21, N$^o$ 1, p. 1-13, 2013. On line: http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/13552074.2013.779445

UNIFEM, *Masculinity and Gender-Based Violence*, UNIFEM Gender fact sheet n$^o$ 5.

WHITE RIBBON CAMPAIGN. *Issue Brief: Engaging Men and Boys to Reduce and Prevent Gender-Based Violence*. Prepared for Status of Women Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada, 2001. On line: http://abusehelplines.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/wrc_swc_issuebrief.pdf

WHITE, Sarah C. "Men, masculinities, and the politics of development," *in Gender and Development*, Oxfam GB, vol. 5, n$^o$ 2, p. 14-22, 1997. On line: http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/741922357

**Tools, trainings and facilitation**

PROMUNDO, Brazil. Educational materials (facilitation manuals, activities, videos) and several articles are on line:
http://www.promundo.org.br/en/publications/home-of-educational-materials/

PROMUNDO. *PROJECT H: Working with Young Men Series.* Five training modules:
*Sexuality and Reproductive Health*, *Fatherhood and Caregiving*, *From Violence to Peaceful Coexistence*, *Reasons and Emotions*, *Preventing and Living with HIV/AIDS*. 2002.
On line in English, Portuguese and Spanish versions:
http://www.promundo.org.br/en/activities/activities-posts/program-h-manuals-download/

PROMUNDO. *Section 1: Santé sexuelle et génésique. Projet H: Série sur la participation des jeunes hommes à la promotion de la santé et de l'égalité des sexes*. French version of *Project H: Working with Young Men Series*, used in the project Supporting the fight against STIs/HIV-AIDS in Haiti (PALIH 2), CCISD and CECI, 2008.

PROMUNDO. *Section 3: De la violence à une coexistence pacifique. Projet H: Série sur la participation des jeunes hommes à la promotion de la santé et de l'égalité des sexes*. French version of *Project H: Working with Young Men Series*, used in the project Supporting the fight against STIs/HIV-AIDS in Haiti (PALIH 2), CCISD and CECI, 2008.

UNFPA and PROMUNDO. *Implication des hommes et des garçons dans l'égalité de genre et de santé: une boîte à outils pour l'action*. UNFPA, Promundo and MenEngage, Brazil, 2010. On line:
http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2011/Engaging%20Men%20and%20Boys%20Toolkit%20FRENCH.pdf

VONARX, Nicolas. *Atelier Masculinité*. PowerPoint presentation on the CECI training given on 10 April 2014.

VONARX, Nicolas. *Une formation d'animateurs et de pairs éducateurs sur la masculinité et le VIH/SIDA en Haïti*. Used in the project Supporting the fight against STIs/HIV-AIDS in Haiti (PALIH 2), CCISD and CECI, 2010.

VONARX, Nicolas. *Formation sur la masculinité. Volet Genre et développement (GED). Projet d'appui à la lutte contre le sida en Afrique de l'Ouest/SIDA 3*. Le Centre de coopération internationale en santé et développement (CCISD). Sainte-Foy, 2005. On line:
http://www.ccisd.org/upload/documents/Documents_de_formation/s30_formation_masculinite.pdf

**Organizations working on the issue of masculinity**

**L'Association des hommes dévoués du Sud-Est** (Haiti) works on sensitizing male peers on questions related to violence against women.

**RWAMREC** (Rwanda) works on gender-based violence as well as on gender inequalities. Its mission is to mobilize Rwandan men to support women's leadership, to contribute to the eradication of gender-based violence and to serve as role models to promote positive masculine behaviour. Site Internet: http://rwamrec.org/

**Promundo** (Brazil) has as its mission promoting equitable and non-violent masculinity and gender relations in Brazil as well as internationally.
Site Internet: http://www.promundo.org.br/en

**MenEngage,** an international alliance of networks present in many countries and regions worldwide, is composed of hundreds of non-governmental organizations, as well as United Nations partner organizations: http://menengage.org/.