Engendering Men

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

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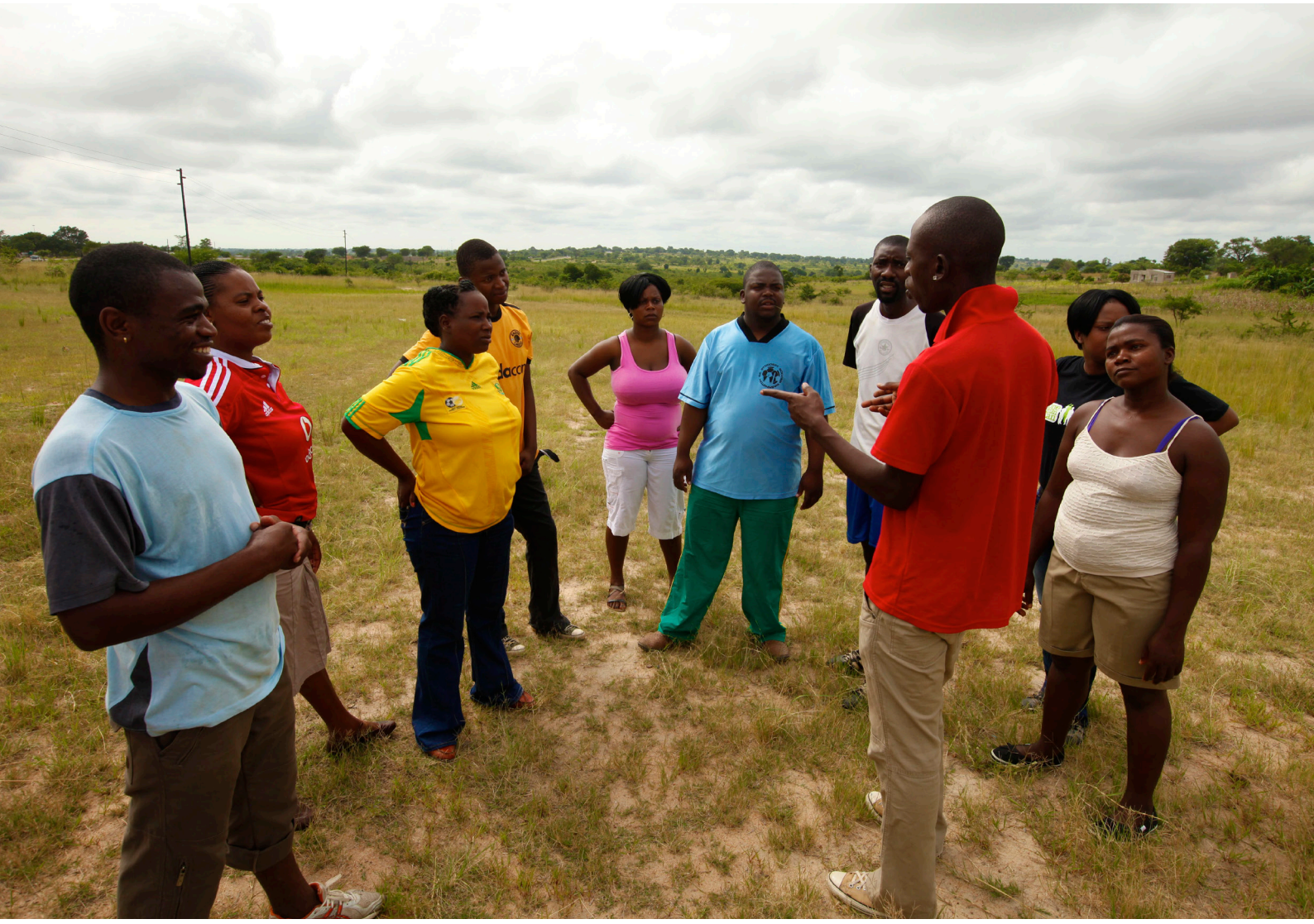

EMERGE
Engendering Men
Evidence on Routes to Gender Equality

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Contents

Boxes

2 Poverty, work and employment

Jerker Edström and Thea Shahrokh[10]

2.1 Introducing the issue

In order to frame the issue of men, boys and gender equality in the domain of work, employment and poverty, it is useful to first present a few basic ideas in both development and in gender. These ideas and related discourses and policies shape the context in which men's roles in women's economic empowerment can be understood.

'Development' is often understood as a type of societal shift from relatively low levels of income and wellbeing to higher ones, where employment or livelihoods figure centrally (Sumner and Tribe 2008). Over the last 50 years or so, the field of development studies has debated the relative importance of economic growth (often with an implicit or explicit 'trickle down' theory of absolute poverty reduction) versus redistributive policies to tackle poverty and socioeconomic inequalities (Peet and Hartwick 2009). Aside from disagreements over the importance of addressing absolute poverty on its own or reducing relative inequality (between rich and poor), these debates have also been marked by differing approaches to integrating aspects of 'human development', rights, capabilities and freedoms, or other societal dimensions – such as gender equality – into economic development strategies (e.g. Sen 2003).

Gender, then, with its origins in feminist thought, found its way into development through the study of the roles of 'women in development' (or WID) (Boserup 1970). Analyses of women's roles brought up the question of gender-based inequality, which came to be recognised as being structurally embedded in social and economic relations of power between women *and men*, and by the 1980s the term 'gender and development' (or GAD) had grown in prevalence. Furthermore, feminist thinkers and economists pointed to a gendered distinction between the 'public' and the 'private', juxtaposing public activities – such as 'work' – as masculine, set against the 'domestic sphere' as feminine.[11]

As gender became recognised as socially constructed – rather than being determined by essential sex differences – this also challenged simple binary notions of gender and 'gender roles', pointing to a vast array of different gender expressions, performances and identities (e.g. Butler 1990). Nevertheless, in policy and practice gender remained primarily concerned with two generalised categories of women and men, if sometimes also contextualised to local settings. Over the 1980s and 1990s, new research and evidence shifted understandings to recognise men alongside women as central to gendered development. This made visible a rich diversity of men and masculinities, drawing attention to 'hierarchical inequalities' and gendered power relations as central to structuring societal gender cultures more generally (Connell 1995). This is described further in Chapter One on 'Framing the evidence and shifting social norms'.

[10] The authors would like to express a debt of gratitude to Gary Barker, Abhijit Das, Zahrah Nesbitt-Ahmed and Kopano Ratele for thorough reviews, insightful comments and constructive suggestions.

[11] 'Second wave' feminists of the 1960s and 1970s drew inspiration from Engels' (1884) notion of the role of 'the family' for social reproduction in the service of capitalist production.

Drawing on this understanding in gender and development, the analysis presented in this chapter can be framed between three key concepts:

- that there is a gendered *'public/private divide'*; that is, economic production and exchange is public and gendered masculine, whilst social reproduction – especially domestic and care work – is considered private and gendered feminine, also being under-valued compared to the former;
- gendered differentials in work and poverty get expressed in '*horizontal inequalities'* between different women and men (also intersecting with class, race, caste, sexuality and so on.), with different participation rates in work and/or gendered 'wage gaps' for similar work;
- *'vertical inequalities'* in incomes, work and power are maintained by masculine power hierarchies embedded in local to global markets, resulting in discriminating 'glass ceilings' restricting the upward mobility of women (and other subordinated social groups).

The functional interdependence of economic production and social reproduction, and the evolving diversification, transformation and increasing flexibility of production in the global economy, can also dislocate and shift areas of work and production from formal (regulated, paid, more secure and taxed) to more informal (unregulated, low-/unpaid and untaxed) activities, as we will see below. The interplay of work and income with social reproduction and relations between men and women is critical for exploring progress towards greater gender equality, and it must be understood within historical trajectories of how societies develop within broader contexts of evolving regional and global orders (of markets, international regulations and political bloc formations). Patriarchal constructions of men as providers, such the 'male breadwinner role' have significant implications on the gendered construction of paid and unpaid work within households, markets and communities, whilst globalisation has also shifted and challenged such norms in recent decades.

A lack of attention to the impact of economic empowerment initiatives (including of women's empowerment efforts) on gender relations has sometimes shown increases both in the burdens on women and girls, typically retaining responsibilities for domestic care work, and in household tensions and resentment by men. In these contexts abusive behaviours and violence against women can be explained as efforts to re-establish male dominance and control (Vyas and Watts 2009). Such 'crises of masculinity' are related to men's reports of stress, depression and inadequacy in their sense of self and relationships, within contexts of economic crisis and poverty. It is important that the linkages between men's practices and economic marginalisation are considered in strategies to promote gender equality and economic empowerment. There is also a call for men's greater involvement in care work in order to help to break down some of the rigidities of male identity and create more equitable household relations, as discussed more in Chapter Three on 'Fatherhood, unpaid care and the care economy', below. Evidence from grassroots microcredit and social protection interventions show some promise of transformative change where gendered power imbalances in the home and the community are engaged explicitly, as explored below. However, it is critical that these interventions take account of the ways in which they are situated in wider structural changes that transform global trade and labour markets to ensure the stability and investment necessary to achieve goals of social justice for both women and men.

This chapter aims to trace evidence on recent trends in work and poverty amongst men and women, how policy and institutions have mediated these changes, the role of men and boys in economic empowerment strategies, as well as identifying evidence of what may work for transforming gender relations in the domains of work and poverty reduction. We then conclude with drawing together the main findings and pointing to some directions for future priorities in research, as well as programme and policy development. It starts at a global

level, in terms of exploring broad trends, but gets increasingly focused in the following sections toward settings in developing countries. It is important to stress that certain areas of analytical interest in this issue are beyond the scope of this paper, including the gender dynamics of informal sector work, intergenerational transfers of wealth and productive assets through inequitable inheritance, or mobility, urbanisation and migration, all of which are very relevant to gender relations and reflect significant trends in gender and development.

2.2 Recent gendered trends in poverty, work and employment

Globalisation has come with increases in female labour force participation rates internationally in the past 30 years, as expanding economic opportunities and shifts in the structure of production – along with conditions of work – have drawn many female workers into the public sphere of the market. Between 1980 and 2008, the gender gap in participation narrowed from 32 percentage points to 26 percentage points, by which time (2008) women represented more than 40 per cent of the global labour force. However, as with men, this does not mean that more women are finding work in all settings: Employment has also slowed in recent years and women's labour force participation rate has in fact stagnated globally between 1990 and 2012, decreasing from 57 to 55 per cent of the potential female labour force over the period (World Bank 2014). Rates of youth unemployment are higher than ever, at 13 per cent globally, and youth face higher unemployment rates than adults (ILO 2014). The economic and social costs of unemployment, underemployment and a declining quality of jobs for young people continue to rise. Within this context, large gender gaps in youth unemployment are evident in regions such as North Africa and the Middle East and, to a lesser extent, Latin America and the Caribbean (ILO 2013).

In addition, women earn less than men; on average they earn between 10 and 30 per cent less than working men globally (World Bank 2014). For women living in poverty and marginalisation these sizeable gender pay gaps are compounded where poverty combines with other factors of social exclusion, such as ethnicity, caste, remoteness, race, disability, or sexual orientation (World Bank 2014). In these contexts, growth in aggregate income may not be broad-based enough to benefit poor and marginalised households. Furthermore, the narrowing of the gender gap in economic participation rates has not meant equality in terms of pay and status and women's increasing labour force participation has coincided with an increase in informal forms of work that are precarious and insecure, in turn restricting access to protection mechanisms such as social insurance (Razavi *et al*. 2012). This is true for women as well as men in many settings, but men are still twice as likely as women to be in full-time paid employment (World Bank 2014).

The increasingly informal, irregular and precarious nature of work for many lower income groups, and the feminisation of the global labour force are two critically relevant features of globalisation. What does the feminisation of the labour market mean for men and women's experiences of gender equality? Women's increased access to work reflects multiple interrelated influences: shifts towards gender equity, such as increased access to education for women and girls, interact with deepening socioeconomic inequalities and other trends, such as growing levels of landlessness and increased costs of living for all. Significantly, this is happening in a context of stagnant and declining rates of male labour force participation (Kabeer 2007). Furthermore, the recent 'feminisation' of anti-poverty programmes, in the pursuit of women's empowerment, has also had significant and divergent implications (both positive and negative) on work towards gender equality. Whilst many women are provided with economic resources to empower themselves and their families, they are often also put under enormous pressures, as the distribution of care responsibilities within the household or the positive reinforcement of domestic care roles for men are rarely addressed. Adding pressure to this is the fact that public (or social) provision of care has been put under severe strain by economic policies constraining public expenditure on social budgets in many countries (Kabeer 2007).

Research has described how this process of change and an associated undermining of historical patriarchal social norms have created uncertainty in many men's lives, leading to feelings of low self-esteem and inadequacy. Mixed methods research in Kenya and Tanzania (Silberschmidt 2001) shows that – in a context of socioeconomic change, the breakdown of social and political institutions, and deepening poverty – widely held, and socially constructed expectations and norms of men as breadwinners and household heads fall into question. This is especially significant in a context of increased unemployment and low income, with men from poor and marginalised groups most affected by a 'crisis of masculinity', in that they are furthest from the ideal of a male provider that underpins the dominant hegemony (Kabeer 2007, Kelbert and Hossain 2014). Manifestation of this sense of insecurity has been observed as sexual control, aggressiveness, and violence against women to restore male dominance (Silberschmidt 2001).

This poses a significant challenge to binary gender stereotypes that do not allow for fluid changes in gender identity. Research from Uganda (Agadjanian 2002) and Ghana (Overå 2007) point to situations where economic crises have put large numbers of men out of work (often in the formal sector), leading them to take over more 'female' jobs in the informal economy. However, we know less about any impacts of such shifts on masculine identity or about men actually taking on more unpaid care and domestic work in their homes. Despite this, there are important implications for policy regarding the economic empowerment of men and women and potential alliances for work toward gender equality.

- First, it is hard to generalise about men's attachments to traditional roles or of 'work' as all-important in their self-identity, as IMAGES research shows that a wide range in proportions – between 34 and 88 per cent – of men interviewed say that they are frequently stressed or depressed because of not having enough work or income.
- Second, men's stress related to livelihood insecurity derives from the socially constructed role of provider and was identified as a key factor associated with perpetration of violence, depression, suicide, alcohol abuse and higher rates of arrest (Barker *et al*. 2011). The notion of men's dominant social role as a provider needs to be overcome, while stable livelihoods need to be available for women and men alike.

In the drive to get women into work, their historical caring roles and responsibilities within the home and the community tend to be overlooked. In other words, the organisation of roles and responsibilities for care needs simultaneous reorganisation (a) between women and men, horizontally, and (b) between the family and the community, or state; that is, between the private and the public. See Chapter Three on 'Fatherhood, unpaid care and the care economy' for further analysis of these issues.

2.3 The roles of policies and institutions in these trends

Different patterns of economic growth have different outcomes for the quantity and quality of employment in different groups. This, in turn, shapes women's and men's prospects of finding work that provides good terms and conditions. Razavi and colleagues (2012) argue that dominant macroeconomic policies have, over the past three decades, performed poorly in terms of generating sufficient employment that is of decent quality for men and women. It is argued that the established policy approach of tight monetary and fiscal policies, with free trade and capital flows, has not proved to be conducive for either widespread development of or extensive improvements in wellbeing and gender equality. There is growing support internationally for alternative macroeconomic policies that, while aiming for macroeconomic stability, take more heed of development and social goals (Razavi *et al*. 2012).

While a global push for women's empowerment and the integration of this into national laws and policies has no doubt aided these trends, sometimes historically embedded *laws and regulations* (often colonial era laws) still constrain women's agency and opportunities more than those of men. Women and men often have different ownership and inheritance rights, or

when restrictions are placed on hours and sectors of work for women but not for men; the laws or customary practices of 102 countries still deny women equal rights in access to land (SIGI 2014). Furthermore, as labour markets have become deregulated and standards relaxed, women's labour force participation is disproportionately occurring in the informal economy at lower income brackets, and more women than men are outside of the protection of laws and regulations for safety at work, for minimum/fair pay, conditions of work or anti-discrimination (Razavi *et al*. 2012; UN Women 2010).

Unequal treatment may also manifest itself more indirectly through biased service delivery, as is often the case for agricultural extension services (World Bank 2012). Here, *institutional bias and market structure* (with women under-represented in non-food crops that are often the target of extension services) reinforce and even deepen inequalities. Reforming land or inheritance rights has also shown to be transformative, enabling women to gain equal legal status in contexts where this has traditionally been denied to them (UN Women 2010). However, gender is not the only axis of social differentiation, and intersectionality between gender and economic inequality needs consideration (as do other axes such as ethnicity, caste etc.). For example, there are some concerns that land purchasing schemes can further entrench unequal power relations between rich and poor women, as has been documented in Mozambique (Kanji *et al*. 2005).

Of particular significance in the process of women's economic empowerment has been the establishment of *access to formal financial services* for poor women in developing countries. Until recently, if women needed loans, they were often forced to borrow from friends, relatives and moneylenders, often at high rates of interest that contributed to keeping them in debt and poverty. Microfinance – a methodology dating from the 1970s and commonly attributed to the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh and Acción in Central America – has over the past 30 years enabled more than 150 million women worldwide to access small loans or 'microcredit' (Maes and Reed 2012), making it one of the most widespread types of intervention for poverty reduction in development today.

Microfinance has been praised as a methodology that has enabled financial services to be delivered to poor women at scale. It is one of the few economic interventions to do so. An ever-widening range of institutions now provide microcredit, including; microfinance institutions, government-owned banks, commercial banks, cooperative banks and NGOs. Group-based methodologies are the most widespread form of delivering microcredit. Mehra and colleagues (2012: 7) outline that 'while these methodologies differ in detail, they are typically organised around a common principle: as a substitute for collateral, they rely on group members to share responsibility for ensuring others repay their loans'. Kabeer's (2005) analysis shows that while access to financial services can and does make a vital contribution to the economic productivity and social wellbeing of poor women and their households, it does not 'automatically' empower women. Furthermore, a recent review of six randomised control trials of microcredit programmes found that these initiatives do not lift people or communities out of poverty, although they do seem to enable more freedom in people's choices (for example of occupation), women's decision-making and the possibility of being more self-reliant (Banerjee, Karlan and Zinman 2015).

While a 'feminisation' of anti-poverty programmes has had significant implications on work towards gender equality, women are often put under enormous pressures as the traditional distribution of care roles and responsibilities within the household and society remains unchallenged, and strategies for reforming care, including enhancing domestic care roles for men, are rarely put forward or employed (Chant 2008). Kabeer (2007) argues that, despite women's increased work and escalating burdens of care, men have often shown a strong resistance to sharing unpaid domestic work. Research in Costa Rica showed that even men who had lost or abdicated their responsibilities as primary breadwinners still defended their exemption from domestic work in strong terms (Chant 2000). However, Kabeer argues that

men's involvement in care work may help to break down some of the rigidities of male identity and lessen their own vulnerability (Kabeer 2007).

Chant's (2008) research highlights the ways in which the *potential benefits of anti-poverty programmes for women can become burdens*, when direct and indirect strategies to enhance women's access to material resources simply increase the loads they bear and the demands made upon them. For instance, social protection initiatives are highlighted for their heavy reliance on women as mothers, making little effort to involve fathers in shared responsibilities, for example in unpaid care work. Molyneux (2008), in her review of conditional cash transfers, particularly of PROGRESA in Mexico, argues that although these programmes are widely replicated due to their perceived positive impact in reducing poverty, they often reinforce asymmetric gender roles, as the programmes' gender bias tends to reinforce the position of women as mothers, tying them more closely to the home. In these programmes and policies, the broader structure of gender roles in the community – and in households in particular – is left unchallenged, often through a reductive focus only on women (and sometimes girls), combined with a lack of a structural and relational analysis, leaving men essentially 'absent'.

Despite their good intentions, programmes thus often effectively endorse and entrench a highly non-egalitarian model of the nuclear family. Because such programmes are constructed within this paradigm, they have little power to destabilise deeply embedded structures of gender inequality, whether in the home, the labour market, or various institutions (Chant 2008). Policy and programme responses therefore need to take into account:

- men and gender relations for the redistribution of power and responsibilities, as well as
- ways in which to reassess the models that are guiding the direction of economic development nationally and internationally and their relationship with gender inequality.

Of course, the role of policies and institutions is not limited to those that operate within communities, but also extends to those involved in development assistance and international economic policymaking itself. In an article exploring the role of institutional context in shaping policy agendas on gender and poverty, Bedford (2007) undertakes a case study of the World Bank's gender lending in Ecuador by using interviews with employees and analysing policy texts to explore the institutional positionality of World Bank gender policymakers. She identifies key constraints on their policy output, namely a tendency and pressure to frame or rationalise gender policy by appeals to growth, productivity and efficiency, as well as a tendency to frame gender policy as being about producing 'complementary sharing' between women and men. The former has been contested and heavily debated in feminist literature, but the latter constraint is explored in more detail by Bedford. She argues that the tendency to restrict gender policy to a complementary focus on 'couples' has itself reinforced gender-binary constructions and a trend of poor men being positioned as unreliable and irresponsible (often drunk and violent) partners, increasingly presented as key to the 'gender policy problem'. The 'problem' therefore becomes framed as the issue of poor men, 'over there' in poor local communities, or 'down-streamed', rather than bring about gendered power relations in the wider economy, nationally or globally.

Razavi and colleagues (2012) argue that society as a whole needs to seek a better balance between the provisions of care work – paid or unpaid – and other paid labour, facilitating greater gender equality in both domains. For many developing countries, attaining gender equality requires strengthening publicly accountable systems and institutions. This means investing in quality, accessible public health, education and care services (including for children and the elderly, accessible to male as well as female clients) that can also become a source of decent gender-equitable employment, and broad-based and redistributive social protection programmes.

2.4 Men's roles in women's economic empowerment

Control over resources and assets, whether through formal ownership, employment or customary access, plays a key role in advancing the rights and wellbeing of women and their families across the globe (World Bank 2012). However there is a mismatch between increases in women's income or asset levels and other expressions of empowerment, including decision-making and participation in public and political life. The role of gender *relations* in this paradox has been explored and the hypothesis presents the roles of men as central.

In an article exploring why masculinity should be considered in microcredit initiatives, Ahmed (2008) explicitly questions the assumption that women can increase agency as they earn more money, without specific strategies for dealing with gendered power hierarchies. Ethnographic research conducted with men and women in rural Bangladesh between 1999 and 2001 interrogates the dominant binary framework and one-gender focus that excludes male relatives of Grameen Bank microcredit clients, arguing that this exacerbates gender-based violence and prevents joint decision-making within the home (Ahmed 2008) Sharecropper women in Bangladesh have expressed the significance of their subordination within the multiple male-dominated spheres of extended family and village community and the research explores the nuances of different masculinities in order to make recommendations on how a spectrum of masculinities can be recognised in microcredit initiatives to empower low-income women and men. Expressions varied between: 'high-minded men' who expressed gender-equitable attitudes and relationships supporting women's empowerment from a rights perspective; 'mixed men' that showed support to women relatives, but within set boundaries that they could control; and men who showed violent responses to women's achievements related to microcredit programmes (Ahmed 2008). The recommendations suggest empowering 'high-minded men' as change agents to reach other men in the community and to change community norms.

Overall, experience from women's economic empowerment presents a mixed picture here. For example, Mehra and colleagues' review of women's agency in microfinance initiatives reflects one side of this mixed picture (Mehra *et al. 2*012). As might be expected, higher income and asset ownership resulting from participation in microcredit programmes often strengthened women's position within households, in terms of decision-making power, greater social mobility and improved access to economic resources (Mehra *et al. 2*012). Similarly, Lakwo (2006), employing a mixed methods approach, found that rural women microcredit clients in Uganda experienced improved decision-making power within their households and gained greater ownership over their microenterprises and some household assets typically controlled by men, such as poultry, and beds with mattresses. By contrast, a number of other studies, also using mixed methods, concluded that improved economic outcomes from microcredit did not always translate into enhanced agency among women clients. For example, Goetz and Sen Gupta (1996) found that the majority of women clients retained only partial or limited control over their loans, and that male relatives exerted substantial control, concluding that participation in microcredit programmes alone did not enhance women clients' ability to exercise agency over their loans (Mehra *et al*. 2012). So, whilst access to finance can at least partially empower women economically within households and communities, there is also often resistance – of the 'obstructive' or 'controlling' variety – and no automatic translation of earnings into control and agency.

In Kabeer and colleagues' (2011) analysis of research on women's empowerment and paid work in Bangladesh, two key 'relational resources' feature among the findings of related impact. Not only do they find that support of the family is crucial in shaping women's experiences of economic empowerment, in different types of work and status, but – more specifically – they also find that women who do speak out and try to exercise more agency often face resistance from men in their households. They conclude that 'women who are valued and supported by other family members, including male members, find it easier to

translate the resources at their disposal into enhanced voice and agency, including their public mobility and participation in politics' (Kabeer, Simeen and Tasneem 2011: 39). The detailed qualitative data provides very good and compelling illustrations of how crucial the role of men can be for women's empowerment (Kabeer *et al*.: 38–39), highlighting the importance of understanding the ways in which men can be 'obstructive' and enhancing the ways in which men can be 'supportive' in such programmes.

Whilst set in the context of 'community development' more broadly, rather than 'women's economic empowerment' or men's engagement specifically, Izugbara and colleagues (Izugbara, Tikkanen and Barron 2014) used ethnographic and interview data from two slums in Kenya, to explore men's perceptions and narratives of men's roles relative to community development. They find Kenyan men to be broadly aware of many of the structural constraints to community development in their specific contexts and that this awareness intersects with a common view that they are themselves both critical and central to ensuring community development. Whilst rebutting the notion that *they* might have to change for their communities to develop, most men interviewed saw such development as dependent on their own quest to perform to many of their traditional scripts of masculinity. The authors caution that any wholesale rejection of locally prevalent norms of masculinity as the main basis for community development strategies is not likely to resonate among men, and they argue that community work with men that fails to acknowledge them as gendered may struggle to succeed. In other words, there are likely limitations to the idea of fundamentally 'reforming men' as the key route to greater gender equality in terms of incomes and work. That may be particularly so when such calls for reform are seen as an imposed agenda from outside their communities, and where potential benefits of change are not explored with and by such men, as discussed further below.

More generally, while research often finds the way that men appear in the design of many women's economic empowerment programmes and policies as 'absent' or not needing to be involved – whether due to men's own assumed 'orientations' and attitudes, or by programme design, or both – we can follow Ahmed's (2008) broad taxonomy and re-describe men's actual or potential roles as: (a) 'obstructive', in terms of overly dominant or controlling engagement of men; (b) 'ambivalent', as in circumscribed, contradictory and conflicted; or (c) 'supportive', to different degrees from implicit to practical or proactive support.

The challenge for programme and policy design becomes; 'how' (in what contexts, for what groups and for what kinds of policies and interventions) can we account for and engage men and boys to shift roles from 'obstructive' to 'ambivalent' and, ultimately, 'supportive'? Furthermore, how can policy and programmes for poverty reduction, economic empowerment and social protection become less limited by pre-set framings focusing only on women, or on women-with-men in couples, rather than on communities (as we find them), diverse social groups, cohabitants and individuals. That is, how do they become 'gender-sensitive' rather than stereotyping? The 'transformation' of gender relations is fundamental to this aim. An area of work in need of far greater understanding and evidence is that of the roles of men and masculinities in policies and institutions 'upstream', in the centres of power and decision-making. This topic is explored further in Chapter Nine on 'Public and political participation'.

2.5 Initiatives engaging men and masculinities that may work

There are by now a wide range of initiatives aimed at women's economic empowerment, such as: Colombia's subsidised day-childcare programmes for working mothers; improving access to productive resources in Ethiopia, with joint land titles granted to husbands and wives; attempting to address gender biases in services, such as in agricultural extension through women's self-help groups in Orissa, India; or trying to overcome institutional biases against women at work using quotas or job placements in Jordan (World Bank 2012: 296–305). However, as revealed by the evidence, most initiatives and policies for women's

economic empowerment and social protection do *not* explicitly factor in the role of men and boys, although there is growing recognition of a need to do so. Consequently, less is known about 'how' this should be done or 'in what capacities' men should be factored in, or what 'theories of change' should be underpinning such approaches, and so on. The evidence above can help us frame how to interpret the few efforts that are well documented with strong evidence in the literature, as well as help to suggest directions for future development and research.

A few different programmes have explicitly aimed at reaching out to men in conjunction with economic (and other forms of) empowerment of women, as well as to document their effectiveness. For example, the evaluation of the WINGS programme in Uganda sought to test whether 'more involvement of men' contributed to better empowerment outcomes for women. The research was experimental, including a group of women participating in the programme with their male household partners, compared to a control group without explicit male involvement. After 18 months, the results did show a small but significant decline in women's psychological stress compared to women in the group with the standard women's empowerment programme, and some improvements in relationship skills demonstrated by male partners were also recorded. However, there was no effect on women's independence, status in the community, or freedom from intimate partner violence (though, importantly, the programme did not increase a woman's probability of experiencing partner violence) (Blattman *et al*. 2013).

In contrast, the well-documented South African 'IMAGE' intervention study of women's economic empowerment (through group lending), seems to have improved not only women's economic situation but also reduced domestic violence and sexual risk-taking (Kim *et al*. 2009). This experimental design study used economic empowerment accompanied with gender training and sexual health education, where women also reached out to 'the community' including to men. However, evidence on how critical the reach out to men was, and what the specific 'roles' of men were in this initiative or 'how' they were addressed, is less well documented. So, while the study is consistent with the hypothesis that a positive engaging of men may well enhance chances of success in women's empowerment approaches, it does not prove that this particular piece is a necessary or critical factor. Box 2.1., below, provides more detail on the IMAGE study.

Box 2.1 The IMAGE study in South Africa

The 'Intervention with Microfinance for AIDS and Gender Equity' (IMAGE) is a complex programme that combines gender and HIV training with group-based microfinance to address issues for wider social change (Kim *et al*. 2009) The microfinance component consisted of loans administered for the development of income-generating activities with a group lending model. The Sisters for Life gender and HIV training programme accompanied loan centre meetings and was structured on the basis of participatory learning and action principles. In a first phase, the programme worked with women on critical reflection and analysis of gender roles and norms, as well as on strengthening communication and leadership skills. In a second phase, the trained women engaged in wider community mobilisation activities with young people and with men. Sets of cross-sectional data were derived from women in three randomly selected matched clusters in rural South Africa, between 2001 and 2005. A comparative analysis between IMAGE and a 'microfinance only' control intervention showed that, although both programmes supported improvements in overall economic wellbeing, the IMAGE sites showed additional associated effects in relation to women's empowerment, including reduced intimate partner violence and HIV protective actions (whilst actual reductions in HIV infections proved impossible to determine). This research suggests that combining women's economic empowerment initiatives with interventions that recognise the wider social and political context in which women's lives are situated have the potential to lead to more substantial change. It also suggests that women's consciousness-raising can be an important precursor to engaging men in the process.

Another approach has been to combine couple and group education with men and women, which shows some promise in improving intra-household dynamics and support for women, particularly through participatory community education and communication techniques. In a pilot based on research with a Rwandan Village Savings and Loan (VSL) scheme, Slegh and colleagues (2013) found that the impact of this group educational training was positive on reducing household-level poverty, on collaboration in households and care activities, as well as on partner relations, decision-making and family dynamics. Box 2.2. lays out the main features of this pilot, which was both 'gender-synchronised' (in working with women and men together) and 'gender-transformative' in its aims and design (to reflect on, address and transform gender relations between partners).

Box 2.2 Engaging men in a Village Savings and Loans scheme, Rwanda

In exploring whether and how the benefits of women's economic empowerment can be enhanced through engaging men at the household level, research in Rwanda has shown that discriminatory gender roles influence the way in which the benefits of a Village Savings and Loans scheme are used, with financial decision-making within the household still being dominated by men, as well as that one of the main sources of conflict in households related to money (Slegh *et al*. 2013). A pilot intervention – 'Journeys of Transformation' – was established to engage men in a couple-focused process, deliberately questioning such roles of men in order to improve their cooperation in household activities (Slegh *et al*. 2013). The intervention engaged men in groups and in couples (with female partners) on household relational dynamics, health and gender-based violence. Using a case-controlled evaluation design with survey-based and interview methods with men and women aged 20–76, the impact of this group educational training was found to be positive on household-level poverty, collaboration in household and care work activities, and on partner relations, decision-making and family dynamics (while it was difficult to confirm a reduction in gender-based violence). The design was based on principles of participatory group education that have been used to change harmful gender norms associated with violence, such as in Stepping Stones activities in South Africa. Based on this study, the intervention is currently being subject to a large-scale randomised control trial in Burundi.

The evidence on effective programmes to engage men in women's economic empowerment is therefore limited, if also indicative of some directions forward. While the Ugandan WINGS programme has shown that engaging men in women's empowerment can reduce women's psychological stress and improve household relations, other empowerment outcomes were limited (though not negative), the South African IMAGE study has shown that programmes for women that also reach out to men can have stronger economic empowerment outcomes (although the specific role of men in this outcome is less certain). The Rwandan pilot of the Village Savings and Loans scheme, which was designed to overcome men's 'obstructive roles' by engaging them in group discussions and couple counselling, did indeed show both improved household economies and improved relations between women and men. Most of these initiatives construct men as a 'problem' and as gatekeepers, but also seek to 'change their attitudes'. Some also seem to support women in managing partner relations and one seeks to directly facilitate household resolution, relations and bargaining. The International Rescue Committee's *Talking about Talking* programming in VSL schemes in Burundi showed that dialogue about joint economic decision-making in the household between men and women led to improvements in negotiation, as disagreements between couples were resolved by discussion as opposed to unilateral decisions made by men (IRC 2010).

There is less research on general community development that is specifically gender-sensitive by incorporating men as gendered beneficiaries, or co-beneficiaries alongside women. Nor have we found any strong evidence from specific economic empowerment strategies tailored to women and to men, specifically but in tandem. Furthermore, we have not found evaluated programmes or research on the relevance and role of men in policies that address gender-based discrimination in pay and conditions in the workplace, nor on the ways in which men and boys may (or may not) be included and accounted for in gender mainstreaming of community development and poverty reduction policies.

There is limited evidence of interventions that look at masculinities and social development in youth employment and employment generation schemes. One relevant initiative is Service Volunteered for All (SERVOL)'s Adolescent Development Program that provides psychosocial support, community development and vocational skills building to address youth marginalisation, harmful and violent masculinities and livelihood insecurity.[12] Evaluative research with SERVOL participants interviewed ten years after their involvement in the programme showed several positive impacts. These included greater confidence, self-awareness, enhanced parenting skills, increased level of tolerance towards others and improved communication skills and relationships with their parents. However, this was not significantly different from the comparison group (Griffith 2002). There is some research on men in relation to policies on childcare, which likely has impacts on the gendered outcomes in economic empowerment, but this is explored further in Chapter Three of this report on 'Fatherhood, unpaid care and the care economy'.

2.6 Conclusion

We have seen how the last 30 years of globalisation and neoliberal policies in national and international development strategies have coincided with, on the one hand, an era of absolute poverty reduction and significant increases in women's labour force participation rates and, on the other, an increasingly informal and precarious nature of work, often particularly so for women – but also for men – at lower income levels. Significant gender wage gaps remain and women are disproportionately concentrated in lower-earning categories of work. These policies have also privileged economic growth and private sector economic production over redistribution, public sector provision of care, protection and social services.

Pressures on public expenditure ceilings (restricting social and development budgets) have led to the prioritisation of those most in need, with women becoming seen as increasingly significant for work and poverty reduction at lower income levels. This increased emphasis on women in economic development has combined with social protection and economic empowerment interventions being targeted specifically to poor women and girls, while research reveals that such approaches often run up against serious constraints by not accounting for poor men's exclusion in this. Men's and boys' own experiences of poverty and work are integral for transformative poverty reduction and routes to gender equality. Male perspectives on economic empowerment are not only important because they impact on those of women and girls, but also because they can have further impacts on gender relations through caring arrangements, sexual risk-taking, interpersonal violence, or men's responses to public participation and political empowerment of women.

The role of *policies and institutions* shaping men's relationships to women's economic empowerment spans a complex mosaic of macro-level social and economic policies and frameworks, to financial and social institutions and service delivery organisations, down to community-level dynamics. Important common features emerging from the research include:

- There is a mismatch between efforts aimed at economic growth, production and income generation vs redistribution, social reproduction and caring roles and functions.

The common outcome has been that women and girls are often doubly burdened in their roles – and particularly so amongst the poor, whilst little policy attention is provided for a more gender-transformative[13] realigning of roles and opportunities of different women and men in a more structural perspective, taking account of vertical inequalities between income

[12] Information on the SERVOL Adolescent Development Programme can be accessed through UNESCO – www.unesco.org/uil/litbase/?menu=4&programme=88 (accessed 11 May 2015).

[13] As defined in Chapter One, above, gender-transformative initiatives refer to those aiming to transform social norms around expected gender roles.

groups or professional hierarchies, alongside those complicated by other issues, such as class, caste, ethnicity or sexuality. Furthermore;

- Little attention and imagination appears to be given to envisioning a better balance between the provisions of care work (paid or unpaid) and other paid labour, which could facilitate greater gender equality in both domains and balancing this across public and private provision.

Evidence on the *roles of men* in recent economic empowerment programmes for women and girls highlights three important points:

- First, the way that men's and boys' roles are constructed, imagined or omitted, in approaches to poverty reduction and economic empowerment strategies for gender equality is broadly negative and is often in dissonance with how men themselves (and many women) perceive their roles in the economy and community development.
- Second, we can discern a range of roles from obstructive through ambivalent (or conflicted) and to supportive of women's empowerment. It is also clear how this is not limited to an economic domain of control of assets and resources, but is context-specific and draws in diverse historical and cultural notions of gender and masculinity.
- Third, a focus in research and policy on men as the 'problem' has been projected onto the role of poor men in local communities and households, while little research and evidence exists on the gendered roles of men and masculinities in terms of social and economic policymaking or within the institutions of state and international agencies influencing these policies.

In terms of what little we do know about *interventions* that can make a positive difference, we have three key findings:

- Engaging men in women's empowerment can reduce women's psychological stress and improve household relations, for example from the experience of WINGS in Uganda.
- The IMAGE study in South Africa demonstrated that economic (and broader) empowerment programmes for women that also reach out to men can have stronger economic empowerment outcomes, even if the specific role of men in this particular outcome is unclear.
- The pilot of 'Journeys of Transformation' in Rwanda, which was specifically designed to engage men in groups and couple discussions, did indeed show *both* improved economic impacts *and* improved relations between women and men in village households (even if this was small-scale and is now being explored at greater scale in Burundi).

Most of these interventions identified or constructed men as a 'problem' and as gatekeepers, but they also seek to change their attitudes and behaviours, with some apparent success. These interventions are still small-scale and intensive, leaving the important question of how such approaches could best be scaled up in large programmes, through policies or other means. In terms of economic and social policies, which specifically address the role of men relative to women's empowerment and welfare, we know even less and we have not been able to find strong evidence in the literature of the last decade.

Future *research and experimentation* should search for policy and programme responses that can; (1) take into account men and gender relations for poverty reduction and care policies at greater scale, and also (2) ways in which to address the models that are guiding the direction of economic development nationally and internationally and their relationship with gender inequality (that is, towards sustainable frameworks that interrelate and balance economic production and social reproduction). As men's crises, emerging in contexts of

inequality and economic stress, can present real obstacles to women's empowerment and can lead to backlash, they also have further negative consequences in terms of men's mental health, sexual risk-taking, substance abuse and interpersonal violence, including violence against women, all of which interweaves in complex and dynamic ways with work and relative poverty. Thus, new research needs to:

- Avoid getting trapped in the simple notion of 'absolute poverty' as a root cause of all of these problems and transition to also dealing with 'inequality'.
- Explore inequality as more than a localised horizontal household- or community-level issue, but also as vertical and systemic (e.g. the issue of care, linked to the role of the state, business and employment regulation, redistribution, taxation etc.).
- Investigate new ways of approaching the problem of intersectionality, simultaneously dealing with gender, economic and other inequalities.

The common problem of downstreaming 'the man question' only to poor men in 'crises of masculinity' is a notable feature in research and policy, when less visible men and masculinities deeply shape research, policy processes, policy formulation, politics and outcomes. Thus:

- There is a need for more fundamental research (with new methodologies) on men and masculinities in 'power; at work' and 'in policy'– that is, 'researching up'.

This might involve more unorthodox research on people in power and policymaking, with a focus on the dynamics of masculine cultures and the material incentives (both social and economic) and implications for males and females of different kinds, as well as for policy itself. A greater understanding of how men and women in power and policymaking view (or are blinded to) gender inequalities – and how this influences how they perform in their domains to influence the kinds of policies they shape and implement – could be extremely helpful for designing better strategies for reform of unequal gender structures in work and socioeconomic policymaking.

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