

BREAKING THE MOULD

Men's Involvement in the Quest for Gender Equity



a UNESCO-ROZAN initiative

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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FOREWORD

This pilot project on the involvement of Men in the quest for Gender Equality with Rozan and in consultation with the Ministry of Women's Affairs, grew out of a general concern expressed by the main responsible body for gender equality in the UN Secretariat, the UN Division for the Advancement of Women, about the slow process worldwide in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action on Equality, Development and Peace.

Since it was decided that boys' and men's contribution to the process towards gender equality would be a theme for discussion in the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) March 2004, the UNESCO Office Islamabad decided to undertake a pilot project in Pakistan, largely based on UNESCO's previous work on male roles and masculinities which has been undertaken in the context of the broader program; 'Towards a Culture of Peace.'

Building a culture of peace requires a long-term perspective that includes unlearning the codes of the culture of war and violence that pervades our existence in numerous ways. Obvious lines are drawn between the micro and the macro level – between how a society is tackling conflicts on a domestic and community level and how it tackles conflict on an international level.

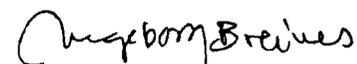
The insight developed reflects the understanding that rigid and stereotyped gender roles prevent individuals from realizing their full potential. Gender roles function as straitjackets on both women and men and run counter to the principle of participatory democracy where everybody should participate with their expertise and experience.

It is acknowledged that whilst women's roles and status have been widely debated over the last decades, men have been seen as the standard human being – the norm – and men's roles and positions have hardly been discussed and much less questioned.

The challenge is to continue to explore the social, cultural and economic conditions producing violence among men; political and practical strategies for reducing men's violence, and the possibilities for raising boys in ways that emphasize qualities such as emotional response, caring, and communication skills that are vital to the development of a culture of peace.

This pilot project has been very inspiring and encouraging; not least working with students and faculty of the departments of fine arts and mass communication in the provincial capitals, notably Peshawar University, National College of Arts and Punjab University, Karachi University and Balochistan University. Rozan has been an extraordinarily competent and cooperative partner.

We hope that the outcome of this pilot project will be useful for the government and other partners and will also be broadly used by universities, the school system, researchers and organizations working on the promotion of gender equality in the country. UNESCO is ready to continue to work with national and international partners on the socialization of boys and girls, notably on male roles and masculinities and on how changing male roles may contribute to gender equality. We are convinced of the importance of involving both women and men in the quest for gender equality.



Ingeborg Breines
*Director/UNESCO Representative
Islamabad*

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Understanding the shift in ownership

If women hold up half the sky, then they cannot hold up more than half of the responsibility towards gender change. (Goodwin 1997:6)

Gender inequality and the resulting discrimination and violence continue to be deeply sensitive issues in Pakistan. Although much work of late has been done to bring the issue to the forefront, efforts so far have focused on women as main players in this struggle. Men are often not only missing from this picture, but unfortunately are viewed only within the narrow framework of the 'powerful' and abusive gender. It is important to accept the reality that men too carry the load of inflexible gender stereotyping and in their own way pay for it. Moreover, it is even more important to realize that all men are not abusers and many are, and can be, real allies.

It would be impossible to bring about a positive change for the women and girl children of Pakistan

without looking at the gender discrimination that they face from a very early age, and its impact on their psyche and emotional well being. It would also be unsustainable to work towards this change without involving and working with men and helping them acknowledge the impact of this discrimination on their lives.

Numerous studies have confirmed that in Pakistan's strongly patriarchal society, women and girls are considered less competent and less worthy than boys, and their needs, whether in the field of education, nutrition, health, physical safety or any other, are often not taken seriously and hence, not met adequately. Western studies have also confirmed that although boys 'benefit' from this preference, in the long run, society's harsh and unrelenting demands and expectations from them often lead to unhealthy life styles and a detrimental impact on their health.

Where women's ill health has been linked traditionally with pregnancy, overwork and gender discrimination, men's rising morbidity rates are more

to do with 'life style' factors such as road accidents, work injuries, sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS and cardiovascular illnesses. Men are currently 80% of the six to seven million injecting drug users worldwide¹. We see these trends mirrored in Pakistan in work with men. Men, once they feel comfortable, will share openly how burdened they feel at having to look after the financial needs of not only their own nuclear family, but at times their parents', unmarried sisters' or younger siblings'. Men also share the heavy obligation of 'protecting' the females of the family and of taking revenge whether they want to or not.

A serious and tragic manifestation of a gender insensitive society is the abuse of power perpetuated by the more powerful (mostly men) against the less powerful (mostly women). It is a fact that in a society that shrouds this sort of violence with stigma and secrecy makes it all the more difficult for victims to speak out against it. The perpetrators of this violence sometimes seem as constrained as the victims and are also trapped by a society that restricts, restrains and moulds in ways that are destructive and powerful, a society that breeds and rewards a culture of 'masculinity', where values such as aggressiveness, competitiveness, dominance, and control rule supreme.

¹ Foreman, Martin. 1999. AIDS and Men: Taking Risks or Taking Responsibility. Panos Institute, London.

Interventions that address the issues of women without acknowledging or addressing the concerns of men can be counterproductive or even sometimes dangerous. Studies have confirmed that individual and collective anxiety over the perceived loss of male power can provoke violence and psychological abuse by men².

Research has also revealed that men are confused about their changing gender roles and are seeking opportunities where they can discuss these changes³. Moreover, this inclusion of men will also serve to mitigate the myth that 'gender' is women's agenda and counter productive to the men's interest. Ultimately, gender reform must serve both men and women's interest and both men and women must own this transformation. Men must participate, not as 'cheerleaders', cheering women on in a weird reversal of roles, and not as ashamed members of the 'powerful' sex, but as equal partners who too need to reach out and break the mould. There is no quick fix, and this may be a higher and a more difficult standard, but maybe the only one that can endure.

² Castels, Manuel. 1997. The Power of Identity. Oxford: Blackwell.

³ Barker, Gary. 1997. "Emerging Global trends related to the role of men and families", Briefing notes for a Brown Bag discussion organized by Chaplin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago.

UNESCO-Rozan Collaboration

The participation of boys and men in creating gender equality is the theme for next year's discussion at the United Nations' Commission on the Status of women, to be held in New York. In collaboration with Rozan, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Islamabad office, therefore, initiated a debate on 'Boys and Men's Involvement in the Quest for Gender Equity', to explore this theme within the context of Pakistani society.

An innovative short-term project was designed through mutual consultation between the two organizations. The initiative sought to underscore the need for men's involvement in the struggle for gender equity, and to explore various perspectives that define men's role in this regard. The project targeted youth groups, particularly students of mass communication and fine arts departments of various universities across the country.

Two intervention strategies to meet the above objectives were defined.

These were:

- Sensitization workshops, which aimed at providing an opportunity to explore and understand the theme.

- Creative arts and writing project, allowing the youth to reflect upon and share their views on the theme.

UNESCO and men

UNESCO's main focus in Pakistan for gender equity is on girls and women's education and on the strengthening of the role and status of female teachers. It has, however, been obvious for the UN-system over some time that in order to achieve gender equality the focus cannot only be on the role and situation of girls and women but the complex and intricate pattern of relations between women and men, boys and girls necessitate that we look at both sexes and their role and situation in a comprehensive manner.

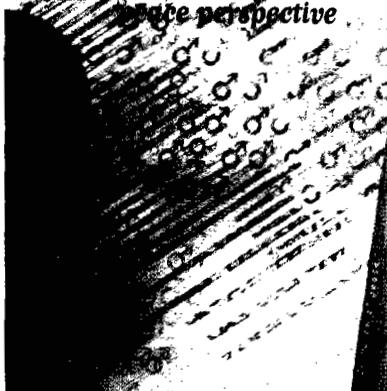
In a world of rapid transformation, in order to prevent recourse to violent behavior, special emphasis must be given to awareness raising and training that address frustrations, feelings of disempowerment and uncertainty, including training from early age in mastering the tools of non-violent conflict resolution.

UNESCO works to encourage and strengthen the development of egalitarian partnerships between women and men at all levels of a society. Given the existing gender imbalances, it is important that men, who are the current power brokers, participate

actively in the discussion on developing equal partnerships, reducing violence and force and strengthening the process towards a culture of peace.

Male roles, masculinities and violence

Edited by
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and Janis J. J. O'Leary



a Culture of Peace'. A publication on the theme was made in 2000 and several follow-up activities and projects have been undertaken.

The first broad attempt by the United Nations system to place male roles and masculinities in relation to peace issues on the world agenda was made by UNESCO in 1997, when they organized an Expert Group meeting on 'Male Roles and Masculinities in the Perspective of

Rozan and men

Rozan is an Islamabad based NGO that was formed in 1998 to protect and promote the emotional health of all people, especially women and children. Its primary areas of work are emotional health, gender and violence against women and children. Rozan promotes its cause through three primary strategies: awareness raising, counseling, and trainings/capacity building.

As part of Rozan's over all mission to "work for a society which is aware, confident and accepting of itself and others", 'men' have always been considered essential partners.

In Rozan's work with policemen we have found powerlessness to be a major factor in the lives of men who share that they find it impossible to bring about a change in the society⁴. Men often become part of this system unwittingly, without consciously being aware of how unfair the system is and how it ultimately cheats men as well as women of their capacity to contribute to this society as whole and healthy individuals.

⁴ Building Bridges 2001: A Rozan police-initiative, Rozan.

Rape &
Sexual Harassment
Domestic Violence
Honor Killing
Eye-teasing
Stare Gunning

ITS TIME FOR
MEN
TO PUT AN END
TO THIS!



RCZ.AJ

WHITE RIBBON CAMPAIGN

WORKING TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

How many are there!!!
state of fear and
many of the women
sisters, daughters,
and wives are not safe. All men are
labeled because some have created
this culture of violence.

To show our love and support for the
women who are being taken to

men who
know our
the problem
counselors
what we
tions and

violence

Men have been defined as the aggressors
but the White Ribbon Campaign says
men can and must be part of the solution

Let us all
for women
voices

SPEAK OUT!!!

For support and information contact
Zeest Counselors at 031-2252822
Monday to Friday
9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

If
by wearing a white ribbon, pledge never
to commit, condone, nor remain silent
about violence against women.

Address:
Phone #
Email:

that campaign and keep it in this period during winter months. The
will be used to choose a person to receive the ribbon. Your
will be put on a chain at each supporting women against
violence. The ribbon will be distributed through Zeest offices and the
will also be available on Zeest's website (www.zeest.org)

Only boys and adults eligible to participate

Rozan has consciously involved men, and is conducting workshops with them, with the objective of acting as a catalyst for this change. An innovative program of Rozan is to sensitize police officers on the issue of violence against women and children.

Rozan has also worked with other men on 'Self-Awareness'. It has held workshops with groups of men addressing issues of self-esteem, communication skills, gender, violence, against women and children, as well as anger and stress management. Just like with the police, the basic aim remains the same: to enable people to better connect

with themselves their needs and issues which, in turn, enables them to be sensitive to others.

In addition to this, Rozan commemorates the White Ribbon Campaign every year. This year the Campaign involved young male volunteers, who after being sensitized, planned and executed the Campaign. This involved distribution of awareness raising material to other males through various activities. The group has gone on to make a club called 'Men for Peace', and plans to continue to meet and work throughout the year.

Exploring issues: the workshops

Gender studies, specifically the subject of males' participation in the struggle for gender equality, are missing from the curriculum of most university departments. Providing students with an opportunity to discuss, understand and explore this theme in a comfortable and non-threatening environment was felt to be an important first step in learning more about the prevailing perceptions regarding the issue.

For this purpose, gender sensitization workshops were especially designed for this group.

Rozan conducted three-day workshops for the students of Mass Communication and Fine Arts for the University of Balochistan, the

University of Karachi, the University of Peshawar, and the University of Punjab. Around 20-25 students from these departments from each university attended the workshop.

A great deal of planning went into developing the module for the workshops. The module was designed carefully to incorporate the theme of male involvement in order to highlight how gender, concepts of power, gender-based violence and patriarchy impact men and women alike.

Contents of the workshop

- Self-Awareness
- Understanding of Gender
- Power
- Patriarchy
- Gender-based violence
- Involvement of Boys and Men in the Quest for Gender Equity

The methodology of the workshops was participatory. Group work, group discussions, role plays and self-reflections were used in the majority of exercises to encourage participants to experience,



understand, and contribute towards individual as well as collective learning. The workshop participants were also given reading packs on Gender, Patriarchy and the need for men's involvement. Workshop exercises were designed to ensure that the need for male involvement in gender equity would be viewed from the perspectives of both sexes, and without creating a threatening situation for either sex.

Self-Awareness

The link between the person and society is key to bringing about sustainable change. Our own attitudes regarding gender are part of all of us and must be addressed and faced before we can begin to look outside. The facilitators introduced the participants of the workshops to the concept of self-awareness and the possible blocks that may arise. The idea was to make participants feel that a change must first start within oneself and then gradually be communicated to others.

Participants revisited their childhood and traced the beginnings of their socialization as girls or boys. They shared feelings, experiences and memories and many

felt that they carried these childhood messages within themselves even though they may not logically agree with what had been conveyed to them.

Understanding gender

Through a participatory process the facilitators sought to clarify the difference between gender and the implications of such strong stereotypical sex roles on individuals, relationships and society.

Many participants shared that up till now they had not realized the difference between gender and sex, and had assumed that girls were by nature soft and sensitive, whereas boys were brave and strong. After the discussion they felt they were clearer about the role of socialization

in shaping gender roles. They shared that by rejecting biological determinism one could liberate oneself of gender stereotyping which restricts a person's thoughts, emotions and behavior.

Implications on men and women were discussed especially with reference to low self-esteem, feelings of inferiority and depression on part of women, and



restrictions on emotional expression, expectations of assuming the responsibility of the bread earner and protector on part of men were discussed. Most of the boys in the group felt that this type of stereotyping leads to aggression in men.

Power

The participants were exposed to the concept of power and its impact on one's life; understanding of the connection between gender and power; and analysis of one's own powerlessness.

Through various activities, the participants analyzed the structure of power in society, analyzed different types of power, and explored the situations in which they felt powerful or powerless. Participants shared that when they talked about their powerlessness it was initially difficult to share, however when they heard other participants sharing, this knowledge in a way gave

" I would prefer this kind of workshop to every other long and lengthy lecture, over people's non-applicable advice and to all media jargon. This workshop was for real...it was touching and practical. It has changed my thinking."

them strength. Girls in the group shared that it was a revelation for them that boys also feel powerless in so many situations. Boys on the other hand shared that they felt helpless while listening to their female counterparts.



Patriarchy

The participants shared that the patriarchal system was apparent in the smallest unit of the society i.e. the home where the father or another male member was the head of the family. Similarly it could be found in every fragment of society, from education, law, economics, politics, media and the state. They shared how from the very beginning a girl child is rendered powerless, when her male counterparts are given preference in terms of food, education and freedom. Patriarchal system then establishes the domination of one over the other. They discussed that in a patriarchal system men are mostly in power and women are the oppressed, however this power

imbalance affects men too as they are also trapped in a system of exploitation.

Participants shared that women also are a pillar of this system, as they too internalize these beliefs and pass them on to their daughters and sisters. The participants shared that understanding patriarchy gave them an insight into the roots of gender inequality and discrimination. Facilitators also discussed that the need for male involvement was crucial because in a patriarchal system such as ours it is men who have more power. Their involvement thus was important not only to enable power sharing with women but also as a strategy to liberate themselves from a system, which enslaves them as well.

Gender-based violence



The sessions on gender-based violence traced various type of violence faced by women from birth and in many cases even before birth while

they are still in the womb.

An interesting twist to this was that the participants were also given an opportunity to review this list alongside a list that depicted violence faced by men at various stages of their life. Participants discussed that it was interesting to note the types of violence men also go through, however they agreed that women were the major victims of gender-based violence. For many it was obvious from this comparison that for women it was their sex alone that sealed their fate as victims.

"I have really gained a insight into the gender issues of our culture, I had never thought about it this way in my 24 years of life. We did not for a moment think that this was a battle between men and women but something that benefits all of us. I will try to practically apply the knowledge I have gained."

Involvement of boys and men in the quest for gender equity

The theme for male involvement was highlighted in each session in order to understand that gender, concepts of power, gender-based violence and patriarchy impacts men and women both. Throughout the workshop the need for male

involvement was discussed in a way that looked at both sexes without necessarily creating a threatening situation. This approach also enabled men to see themselves as partners in the quest for gender equity.

The participants, particularly men, discussed ways and made personal commitments on what they could do to end gender discrimination. Some of what they shared included, being conscious of these issues in their own home, telling their friends about these issues, using media and art as a tool to raise awareness about gender equality.

Conclusion

On the whole the workshops were quite effective in achieving what they set out to do. The facilitators



noted that most participants were open to new ideas and concepts and were sensitive towards the issue.

Participants at all universities seemed to realize the

importance of mass media and visual arts as significant change mediums. Many participants also committed to work on gender issues in their private capacity.

The students of the University of Balochistan strongly believed that for any sustainable

change it was important to understand the traditions and culture of the area, and to involve its people in a non-threatening manner. Moreover, students were of the opinion that community people would serve as ideal change agents in the process of gender equity.

It was interesting to note that there was less inhibition in the interaction of the boys and girls at the University of Karachi and the University of Punjab as compared to the University of Peshawar and the University of Balochistan. It was also felt that the understanding of patriarchy was much deeper at the Balochistan University as compared to other universities.

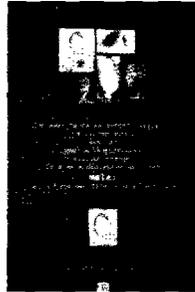
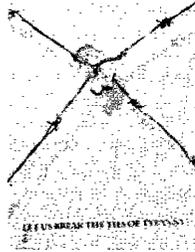
“ The workshop helped to view my personality, it opened my mind to gender and power issues. It showed me a new direction and helped me realize that I’m also powerful. Everything I’ve gained I will try and apply it in my life and spread this knowledge to others as well.”

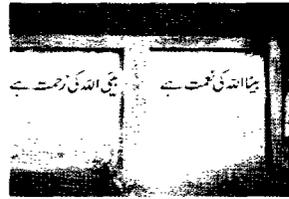
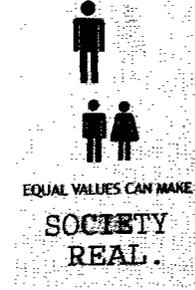
“Frankly when I first agreed to this workshop I had no idea what I was getting into, but now I’m extremely glad that I did attend this workshop. It has not only opened doors for a broader vision for myself, but also provided me with a lot of food for thought. I hope such interactive workshops are organized more frequently.”

**The workshops were
conducted
in the following order**

2-4 October 2003	The University of Peshawar
13-15 October 2003	The University of Karachi
16-18 October 2003	The University of Punjab
20-22 October 2003	The University of Balochistan

The art work produced by students





Transforming through art: the creative project

In order to provide an opportunity to male and female students of Pakistan to explore and debate the theme of male involvement, UNESCO Islamabad and Rozan conducted a creative project for the students of Fine Arts and Mass Communication in five major educational institutions of Pakistan. This included the University of Balochistan, the University of Karachi, the National College of Arts, the University of Peshawar, and the University of Punjab.

The participants of the project were required to develop and submit original pieces of creative art and

creative writing on the theme. The participants submitted their entries in two categories:

Creative Visual Art: Posters, Drawings, Paintings and Photos (Students of Mass Communication also sent in posters in this category);

Creative Writing: Essays, Poems, Slogans, Features, Leaflets and Short Stories.

A number of 112 posters and 33 paintings were received in the category of creative art, while the creative writing items included 21 features, 6 poems and short stories, and 3 slogans.

The aim of holding this project was to motivate the students to work creatively on the subject of gender, and to collect and document information about the youth's ideas and thoughts. The students of Mass Communications and Fine Arts were selected because their disciplines allow them to create awareness on different social and political issues, where they can possibly mould and shape the ideas and thoughts of the masses. The organizers felt that



these students could serve as change agents in the struggle towards gender equity.

Members of the review Committee

The entries were screened by a panel of judges and selected for display for exhibition at an awareness-raising seminar in Islamabad held on December 3, 2003, jointly hosted by UNESCO Islamabad and Rozan. Two artists, two journalists, and a Rozan's representative were selected to review the works of the participants.

- Jamal Shah and Samita Ahmad for Visual Art;
- Kavar Ghumman and Rubab Fatima for Creative Writing; and
- Anoushey Nazir as Rozan's representative.

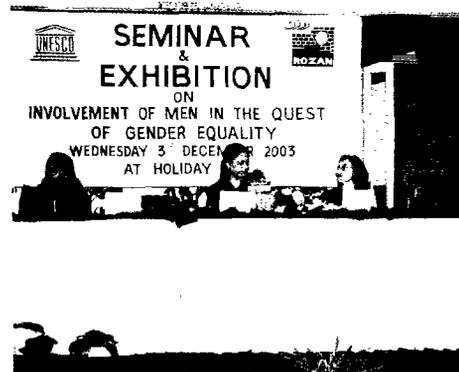
Exhibition and seminar

UNESCO and Rozan organized a large-scale seminar and exhibition on December 3, 2003 to create awareness about the issue of men's involvement in the quest for gender equity. The creative works

(creative art and creative writing), selected earlier by the panel of judges, were put on display prior to the seminar. Ms. Ingeborg Breines, Director

UNESCO Islamabad, Ms. Neelofar Bakhtiar, Advisor to the Prime Minister on Women's Development, Social Welfare and Special Education, and Ms. Maria Rashid, Program Director of Rozan, addressed the seminar and stressed the need of male involvement in promoting gender equity.

The event attracted a good response from the Pakistani media as it was given a fair coverage in the leading English and vernacular



newspapers of the country. The event was telecast in the PTV News, and a private channel also aired a program on the activity.

Men's role in gender equality stressed

SLAMABAD: An exhibition of paintings held on the occasion of a seminar titled 'Involvement of Men in the quest of gender equality' at a local hotel - Staff reports by Syed Mehdi



SLAMABAD: An exhibition of paintings held on the occasion of a seminar titled 'Involvement of Men in the quest of gender equality' at a local hotel - Staff reports by Syed Mehdi

Overview of art work

The body of work collected from the Fine Arts departments of the universities exhibited a large range of issues. Students were asked to produce their own individual artwork that reflected the theme of 'Male Participation in Creating Gender Equity'. There were no hard and fast rules regarding what the students produced, nor was the theme further elaborated for the participating young artists. The result of this exercise was a diverse body of artwork - diverse both in its range of issues and its levels of artistic ability.

There are two kinds of work: oil paintings and (graphic design) posters. However, the paintings too display a 'poster' sensibility in terms of the directness of approach and message. Both in the paintings and posters, realistic and symbolic elements are employed, often attached with slogans and messages.

Male participation in creating gender equity is rarely visible as a theme; some students do attempt to portray this topic directly while the rest approach the general subject of gender discrimination. On the whole, a picture of discontentment and 'seeing through' the patriarchal establishment is depicted.

There is a clear articulation of the discrimination that is faced by girls and women in every sphere of life. The paintings and posters attempt to portray this imbalance and injustice in different areas; some do this symbolically, using male and female symbols, while others point



to the specifics of a particular unjust acts, e.g. two clocks showing how comparative men and women's work hours function in society.

Many topics are covered through the artwork in which students explore the unfair treatment of females in various spheres of society. These include:

- **Access to Education:** A painting shows a woman in a cage holding a beggar's bowl. All around the cage there are stacks of books and manuscripts, but outside the woman's reach.¹ This is a commentary on how there is a deliberate scheme in place that prevents women from gaining education and knowledge.
- **Purdah--Women's Segregation, Seclusion and Dress Code:** A mixed-media collage² depicts a scene from a traditional Muslim society. We are unaware of the name of the nation or the geographic location in the collage, but the scene is painted of a bazaar where a group of men is



shown at leisure in a Khahva-khana (the tea shop), while a few female figures, covered from head to toe, pass by. While the men are confident and enjoying their ownership of this public space, the women figures are almost hidden away and unsure of their relationship to this world outside their homes. A powerful picture is painted of the disparities of power and territory between the sexes, especially in Muslim societies.

- **Ban on Women's Voice:** A painting depicts a Pakistani woman wearing a traditional head-cover, whose mouth has a lock on it. On one side of the painting there is a male hand that holds the key to the lock.³ The idea might be that there is a grave silence of women in traditional Pakistani society; they are not decision-makers, they are not able to express themselves, or rather they are not allowed to; they do not have a voice. Perhaps it is being said that since the 'lock' is put in place by males, they might be the ones to be able to open it and give

¹ Ibrahim, the University of Balochistan.

² Sanya Arif, the University of Karachi.

³ Sabika Bukhari, the University of Balochistan.

women their voice again. This is a more direct treatment of the theme of 'male participation', as it is a critique of male roles in patriarchy.

- **Unequal Treatment of Male and Female Children:** A painting portrays a young girl and boy standing side by side. They might be of the same age, but behind them their scenarios are starkly different. The girl is shown in a dark and closed room, with only a small window for light and air, while the boy is shown in a sunny playground with playmates and greenery. The body of the girl is bound by a barbed wire, and a wilted plant emerges from the top of her head



while the boy has a healthy nurtured plant on his head.⁴ This is a strong statement about how male and female children are treated differently, with the females receiving fewer or no freedoms.

⁴ Aneeshah Ali, the University of Balochistan.

Another poster shows a traditionally dressed father happily holding his son's hand, while other female offspring are kept in the background. The slogan reads: 'Bachay Sab HE Achay', employing an English-Urdu wordplay that illustrates our society's preference for male children.



- **Unfair Working Hours for Women:** A poster with two clocks showing the differences in working hours for men and women,⁵ demonstrating the fact that women have to work round-the-clock in the workplace and/or in the home, while men only work for a limited time in the workplace.
- **The Burden of Dowry:** A cartoon portrays a Pakistani bride chained by 'jahez' (dowry) items, as if her worth is tragically linked to the worth of material objects. It is a very clear statement about

⁵ Qurat-ul-Husain, the University of Karachi.

the materialism attached to the institution of marriage and its negative bias against women.⁶

- **Unfair and Unrealistic Requirements for Marriage:** A poster⁷ depicted matrimonial ads in a collage format, illustrating the materialistic and covetous requirements for a suitable female partner, another honest statement about our social norms.

- **Violence against Women:** "Never-ending stories"⁸ shows clips from newspapers that reported violence of sorts against women. It highlights the fact that we have become numb to these incidents and, as a society, have almost come to accept this violence.

Another painting⁹ shows a fearful crouched female figure with a tall and looming male shadow over her [it reads "Under the Shadow of Violence", a slogan that seems to be redundant], making clear that a



lot of women continue to live in fear everyday, that gender roles in society are in grave imbalance, and men continue to be the main perpetrators of violence. Another poster lists the kinds of violence women face and says "It's time for Men to put an end to this"¹⁰—it is well-meaning and direct, clearly stating that since men are active agents in this imbalance, they have to take the initiative to end it as well.

On the whole, the theme addressed in both the paintings and posters is the stark existence of gender inequality in the environment inhabited by the artists. This is true of the work produced both by the male and female candidates.

In rare cases where 'male participation in gender equality' is directly explored as a topic, it is often treated without gender-sensitivity, as if the battle for gender equality needs a 'necessary' male leadership and direction. "Both are equal, though one has to lead"¹¹, "The key to better life is MAN'S ROLE in gender equality"¹², "Is there a

⁶ Ammara Gul Agha, the University of Karachi.

⁷ Saffana, the University of Karachi.

⁸ Roll no. 15, the National College of Arts.

⁹ Johara, the University of Balochistan.

¹⁰ Abdur-Rehman, the University of Peshawar.

¹¹ Roll no. 28, the National College of Arts.

¹² Irum Malik, the University of Peshawar.

man who can help me?"¹³, "Fragile things need a lot of care"¹⁴ [i.e. women!] are examples of slogans that exhibit this gender-insensitivity. These pieces view women as weak and helpless and therefore in 'desperate' need of male involvement, direction, and support. Some see a balanced society resulting from a balance of male and female energies, powers and roles, although their well-meaning artistic imagery lacks in strength. These pieces often show male and female symbols interlinked or supporting the globe.

Through the overall body of artwork there is evidence of a lively stream of thinking along the lines of gender. The work demonstrates that the students have their own independent experiences and are thinking about male-female relations. There is clear articulation of the imbalances, discrimination, violations and violence that women are the victims of.



¹³ Nasir Rauf, the University of Peshawar.

¹⁴ Imtiaz Ali, the University of Peshawar.

One aspect that is not visible in the posters and paintings is the victimization of men by the system of patriarchy. This is perhaps because at the moment there is such a heavy societal imbalance in the favor of men in Pakistani society that it is hard to picture them as victims. And yet, there is a need for men to also consider the limited and rigid roles that they are assigned by patriarchal society besides articulating the need for men's partnership in ending the oppression of women.

Technically, the artwork produced has a qualitative range. While the paintings do not on the whole exhibit the subtlety required by their genre, the posters are technically quite mature. Those participants who chose to express themselves through the medium of oil painting are still thinking and articulating their message in terms of very direct statements and visually graphic-design images that suit the medium of posters more. These symbolic





images amongst the oil paintings might as well have been posters.

The paintings that choose realism as their style exhibit a slightly more mature technique, while they employ a certain level of symbolism. Some of these still do not portray 'male

involvement in gender equity', the selected theme of the exercise, but still make powerful statements about the state of gender relations in their environment.

Especially in the poster designs, there is almost a universal use of the English language and western and western-inspired visuals. This prevents the creation of culturally relevant and appropriate messages and images. The use of local, regional languages would have resulted in more original solutions and contextual slogans. For example instead of using the English 'gender equity' as a loaded title students could have explored instead its more subtle occurrences in everyday life. Perhaps it is technically easier for the students using computer

graphics programs to incorporate Roman script, and therefore the English language, into their work.

By involving both male and female students, this exercise has already involved both genders in the campaign for gender equality, a positive step in the struggle for change. Also, by targeting visual art students in this workshop and artwork exercise, the organizers have taken a step to sensitize individuals who have the ability to reach out to the larger society.

-- Reviewed by Sameeta Ahmed¹⁵

There is a predominant element of protest in the works of the students, be it painting or poster. The works focus on issues such as discrimination against women in education and work, mobility of women, unfair working hours, and violence against women in various forms.

(Jamal Shah, Hunerkada)

¹⁵ Sameeta Ahmed is an artist and has a background in Fine Arts as well as training in Architecture. She currently practices in Islamabad.

Overview of creative writings

If you are not willing to come out of the darkness
Nobody would be able to save you
If you are resolute
Not to tolerate oppression any further
No one can eliminate you...¹⁶

The students of Mass Communication of the four major universities of Pakistan have come up with severe criticism on the prevalent gender inequality inherent in the socio-economic fabric of the country. Their disapproval and condemnation of the unjust gender norms in the society is candid and forthright, unequivocally visible in their short stories, features, poems and slogans. Their treatment of the theme of gender is straightforward and unmitigated.

The purpose of the UNESCO-Rozan creative project with the future journalists and media personnel of the country was to explore the subject of men's involvement in the quest for gender equity, but this isn't strongly evident in the manuscripts. However, one must acknowledge the fact that a majority of writers have a strong realization of the evils of gender inequality, and they appear to be quite

sensitive to the issue in their own ways. They have a great desire and conviction to eradicate gender injustice from society. They also come up with various solutions, which in their opinion can be applied to bring about a change.

The students' understanding of gender and their insight into the concept of males' participation in working towards a gender-just society might have increased after attending the three-day workshops conducted by Rozan, but as many of these writings were done prior to the workshops, it is understandable that they reflect mostly predominant ideas about gender.

Surprisingly there is not much difference in the perception of male and female writers in viewing gender discrimination. Both male and female writers hold men responsible for the heinous crimes against women in the society; both want men to modify their attitude and change the present norms of discrimination against women.

Seldom does the idea of participation of men in the quest for gender equity as a need of men themselves come out in the writings. However, there are some exceptions.

"Gender discrimination doesn't only affect women; men are sufferers too. Men have to adopt a macho,

¹⁶ Translated from Urdu; 'Ay Hawwa Ki Beti! (O Eve's Daughter!)', by Muhammad Asif Ghaffar of the University of Karachi.

strong and insensitive behavior that leads them towards the suppression of their own emotions.”
(‘The Whole Truth’ by Mohammad Khurram Siddiqui)

But this is a very rare example, as on most occasions we see that though male writers feel strongly about violation of women’s rights committed by other men, they want to participate in the struggle only for women’s sake. They seem to be unaware of their own problems due to the stark gender imbalance in the society.

Violence against women and violence at home in particular come up as popular subjects in the writings. In most stories, men are seen as perpetrators of violence against women and are abusing their rights; ironically they are also perceived as granters of these rights. The participation of men in creating a gender-just society appears to be limited to men’s benevolence and a sudden transformation in their attitude towards women, which neither challenges men’s superior position in the society nor uplifts women’s status radically. Men are not seen as partners in the quest, but as saviors.

For example, there is a short story titled ‘Education for All’, penned by Kausar Batool of the University of Punjab, which discusses the subject of women’s education in the country. Here, Rani, a five-year-old girl, is neither permitted to play with boys outside

her house, nor is she allowed to go to school by her orthodox father. There are two men in this story who exercise power on Rani in different ways. One is Rani’s illiterate father who abhors women’s education, and the other is Rani’s educated brother whose intervention is essential for Rani to get access to education. Though men’s role is appreciated in the story, Rani’s own, rather passive role, is a reflection of how society perceives women.

A great number of writers have considered home to be a place where violations of women’s rights stem from. Most female protagonists in short stories are shown struggling for their rights in the confines of their families. Issues such as sexual abuse and harassment of women at the workplace have not been highlighted. Instead, they have chosen to highlight the abuse taking place at home, or within the peripheries of a family. The struggle of women in social, economic and political arenas is surprisingly missing in the short stories, however some students of the University of Balochistan and the University of Peshawar have depicted these aspects in their features.

Most short stories revolve around the relationships—women’s relationship with men in the framework of a family. The writers, hence, break the popular myth that sexual abuse is an activity committed only by strangers. In a majority of write-ups, fathers and brothers are shown as violators of women’s rights.

The writings also highlight the discrimination in the social upbringing of male and female children. They explicitly narrate the biased messages that boys and girls receive during their childhood and, which according to the writers, are the root cause of gender discrimination.

“A boy is expected to be strong right from his childhood, and is taught not to act like girls. On the contrary, girls are supposed to observe ‘purdah’, be ‘pious’, and not to mingle with boys.” (Translated from Urdu; ‘Muasharay Main Sinf-i-Mutiaz-Gender Discrimination in Society’ by Zeb-un-Nisa Gharsheen of the University of Balochistan)

Most writers have regarded dearth of religious knowledge and deviation from Islamic codes and principles as main reasons of prejudices against women. They have lampooned the mullahs and religious leaders for blatant violation of women’s rights, but at the same time, the writers foresee the panacea in ‘true’ preaching of Islam—a religion, which according to them gives the ultimate rights to women.

A feature by Saeed-ul-Haque of the University of Karachi, ‘Islam Aur Huqooq-e-Niswaan (Islam and Women’s Rights), claims that religious scholars have tarnished the image of Islamic teachings by wrongly interpreting the Quran. “The mullahs have misinterpreted and misquoted the Quranic verses,

which has brought a bad name on Islam. This has also resulted into justification and strengthening of un-Islamic customs like Karo Kari¹⁷ and Vani¹⁸. Islam teaches justice for all; it does not preach violence.” (Translated from Urdu).

Similarly, Zara Haider Warraich of the University of Punjab stresses in her feature: “If men/boys understand the status of women in Islam, they would not only be able to help themselves but would also be contributing a lot towards gender equality.” Here, there is a slight reference to the idea of gender discrimination as men’s problem, but the premiere position of men is reinforced throughout the article. “The enlightened men can tell the other less enlightened men about the respect that a woman deserves,” says the writer.

Another pre-dominant feeling that runs through some writings is the disillusionment with the West. Students of Balochistan and Peshawar Universities have looked at the issue of gender from their own cultural perspective. They have criticized western ideas about development too. Allah Noor Khan of the University of Balochistan has quoted extensively from the works of different western writers and philosophers, who, according to him, considered

¹⁷ A feudal custom in which a couple is accused of ‘immorality’, labeled as impious or ‘black’, and hence killed.

¹⁸ A tribal way of dealing with a murder case in which the perpetrators’ family give away one or more women to the victims’ family in order to save the perpetrators.

women inferior to man. He cites examples from Aristotle, the Middle Ages, Shakespeare, French Revolution and Industrial Revolution to delineate the widespread discrimination against womenfolk that existed in the West. He also believes that Islam had bestowed equal rights to women prior to the West.

Students of the University of Karachi and the University of Punjab too have reservations against western ideas, and they seem to prefer the Islamic models to emancipate the women. But unlike students of Balochistan and Peshawar Universities, these students do not depict their cultural ethos as much to highlight gender inequality in the society.

Students of Balochistan and Peshawar Universities appear more progressive in their approach as compared to students of Karachi University and the Punjab University. The understanding of patriarchy is deeper and genuine in the features done by students of Balochistan and Peshawar universities. This may be the result of progressive and nationalistic fervors that have influenced the educated class in these two smaller provinces of Pakistan, or may be the manifestation of the sheer suffering and distress rampant in these areas. Womenfolk are more oppressed and subjugated in the tribal set-up of these provinces, and the writings depict the rejection and repulsion of these students towards this structure. These students have also criticized the political system of the country very aggressively. On

the contrary, students of the University of Karachi and the University of Punjab have not analyzed the problem in terms of class struggle; their approach seems to be apolitical.

“A member of Balochistan’s provincial assembly told me that she has to take permission from her husband to speak in the parliament, who keeps observing her acts from the guests’ chamber. She speaks if he gives her a signal from the chamber, otherwise she remains silent.” (Translated from Urdu; ‘Fifty six years of enslavement of Pakistani women’ by Rahib Bledi, the University of Balochistan)

The students of Balochistan and Peshawar Universities have also discussed misogynistic tribal customs and exposed tribal behavior towards women.

The students of Mass Communication have come down harsh on the role of media in strengthening masculine and patriarchal notions, and subscribing a subservient role to women. One can hope that when these students start their professional career, they would be more sensitive to the issue of gender than their predecessors.

“Local television channels depict women in a stereotypical manner. In fact this depiction has now begun to get somewhat demeaning for women.”

(Excerpts from 'Media Depiction of Women in Pakistan' by Xari Jalil)

There is a mixture of pessimistic views and optimistic notes that run along all the write-ups. As far as the expression of ideas is concerned, the writers appear more confident and sensitive in short stories rather than in features, slogans and poems.

The UNESCO-Rozan creative writing project brings out the humane and sensitive side of university students and exposes them to the issue of gender in Pakistan and the role of Pakistani men in putting an end to gender discrimination. Viewing gender from the perspective of male involvement might be a new concept for these students, as much of the curricula in Pakistani is not only gender insensitive, but also heavily patriarchal.

It is a heartening feeling that the future media personnel of Pakistan have sonorously voiced their views on the subject. They might not be very mature in their style, technique and craft, they might not have addressed the UNESCO-Rozan theme to the fullest; but the fact that they have something to say about gender discrimination creatively augurs well for Pakistani society. One hopes that such initiatives will train and mobilize the young writers of Pakistan, particularly the male writers, to carry forward the task to eradicate all forms of discrimination against

women, and establish a gender-equal society, precisely for their own sake.

Reviewed by Shamil Shams¹⁹

...Mehru could not resist anymore and the next morning she demanded her rights. Her brothers were shocked at her bravery, as they never expected this from her. They took it as their insult and beat her like beasts. They wanted to teach her a lesson so that a woman should never dare to ask for her rights again. They locked her inside a room and she began to live like a slave in her own house. There was no one to listen to her cries, no one to wipe her tears. Death was what she preferred over a life of misery and insult.

Mehru remained in this condition for almost eight years. At last fate showered happiness on her, as Haroon, her brother who had settled in Canada, returned home. When he saw Mehru he was shocked. Mehru's servant told him the entire story. Haroon cursed himself for forgetting his beloved sister and for leaving her in the hell. He repented and finally decided to take Mehru's responsibility.

¹⁹ Shamil Shams works as Communications Officer with Rozan and has a background in journalism and media.

Later, Haroon married her off to a noble man.

The same Mehru now is an MPA, one of the topmost bureaucrats in the country and Chief Executive of an NGO, working not only to protect women's rights but also to create awareness amongst men on women's issues.

Mehru got her rights and a respectable position in the society because of the support of her brother Haroon and her husband Ali...

(A. Raffay Farroq; the University of Punjab)

...When Palwasha got her paycheck for the first time after marriage she wanted to spend it on the decoration of her bedroom, but her husband Zaman very politely refused to accept her money. "Why?" Palwasha wanted to know. "Because it is your money," said Zaman, "you should spend this money on yourself," he added. "But it is my room that I want to spend this money on," Palwasha's voice quivered. "I have told you very clearly that you will not do it. It is my room first, and if you wish to decorate it, then you will have to wait for me to arrange

money for it. Get that straight!" said Zaman angrily and left the room...

Palwasha is now 49 years old. Her son Shahmeer is about to get married and she is doing some shopping for him. "Shahmeer, can I please buy this bedcover for your room?" asked a cautious Palwasha. "Of course mama!" said Shahmeer, "That would be so sweet of you." Palwasha felt like jumping with happiness. "Mama, why are you asking such questions? Am I not your flesh and blood? You have full right over me," said Shahmeer. "You will never understand love," sighed Palwasha. She has finally someone who does not account her money as 'untouchable'.

(By Wajeaha Sabahat; the University of Punjab)

"The students come harsh on the prevailing forms of media in the country that according to them are promoting stereotypical myths about women. It is encouraging that both male and female students desire a society where women and men would be treated on an equal plane."

(Khawar Ghumman, correspondent Daily Dawn)



The way forward

The UNESCO-Rozan initiative to involve men in the quest for gender equity by conducting a creative project and three-day workshops with Pakistani students was successful in more ways than one. The initiative provided the young generation of Pakistan with an opportunity to explore and to voice their ideas and opinions regarding prevalent gender discrimination and inequalities.

The UNESCO-Rozan initiative was aimed at highlighting the underlying dynamics of men and women's lives and to provide them with opportunities so that they could reflect on their own problems, challenge norms that are detrimental to their emotional health, hear and understand each other's perspectives, and gain the confidence to take charge of their own lives.

The workshops exposed the

students to the concepts of gender and enhanced their insight into the socio-economic and socio-political structures of a society that gives fuel to gender injustice and violence against women. The participants also learnt why boys and men should be involved in this struggle and how they could change the existing system.

The initiative is a beginning step towards a long journey. Through the help of creative project and sensitization workshops, UNESCO and Rozan were able to reach out to the future change agents of society.

Students of the visual arts today are geared to be the artists, graphic designers, filmmakers, advertising directors, and television producers of tomorrow. They will be the creative minds running one of the most influential aspects of our social framework, the media. Influencing the minds of these students through gender-awareness is a powerful step towards change, and perhaps this subject could be made a compulsory part of their curriculum in the future.

The facilitators of the workshops feel that they could not do justice to the theme in three days. As one

facilitator pointed out, "The issues discussed in the workshop were relevant to the students. This was evident from their intense discussions. Many a time, much to our reluctance, we had to cut the heated debate short. However, we also felt a follow-up would be very important, as one activity, albeit significant as a starting point, must be sustained so that students continue to think along these themes."

A learning that was echoed by most was that it is important that instead of just focusing on each case of violence or on individual man's acts of violence against women, the entire culture that creates current male roles and identities--defined as 'masculinities'--be analyzed and challenged. Sensitization to gender inequalities, and hence power structures needs to be approached in the context of our personal lives, how the responsibility for change rests with all of us in challenging these prescribed norms, and how this is important not only for a just society but for our own lives as individuals, whether we are male or female. Therefore, we strongly believe that:

- Men must be part of the struggle for gender justice as working solely with women on issues

that clearly affect men as well as women can only serve half the purpose and can even be destructive. It overloads women with the responsibility of change; women in modern society already carry the additional burden of income generation without any reduction in their household and child rearing responsibilities;

- Men and women both pay a heavy price for gender stereotyping and, as a result, both are limited in the growth of vital human dimensions of their being, used in their interaction. The definition of violence must acknowledge a far wider range of emotions including

fear¹ (Kimmel, UNESCO 2000); men too must be a clear target group for change, for themselves, for the women in their lives, for their children and also for society at large.



¹ Kimmel, Micheal 2000.Reducing men's violence: the personal meets the political. Male roles masculinities and violence: A culture of peace perspectives. UNESCO 2000.

- As changes come about no matter how subtle in the fabric of gender relations, due to the spread of development work, both men and women have to come to terms with their changing gender roles where both masculine and feminine values are being challenged. In her paper 'The negative side of development interventions and gender transitions', Safilios-Rothschild² points out that "men are at a loss as to how to define themselves and how to validate their masculinity'. Gender work is allowing women to move on to more 'prestigious' roles but for men it means 'downgrading themselves' to roles normally embraced by females.

We feel strongly that men, like women, also need the space and opportunity to explore and discuss their feelings in this context. It is crucial that both sexes be able to have opportunities to share their concerns and perspectives with each other in ways which are non confrontational and based on mutual trust.

² Safilios-Rothschild, Constantina. 2000. The negative side of development interventions and gender transitions: impoverished male roles threaten peace. Male roles, masculinities and violence: A culture of peace perspectives. UNESCO 2000.

Participating students

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Syeda Hina Zehra
Syeda Tamkeen Hassan
Curim-ul-Islam
Beena Qureshi
Amara Gul Agha
Sajjad Ahmed
Ansar Shiekh
Shehla Naz Niazi
Taseem Ali Asghar
Kashan Abedin
Alifia Zulfiqar
Tasneem Ali Asghar
Ambreen Masood
Khalid
Farida
Qurat-ul-Hussain
Safana
Fariha Shabnam
Shafaq Haqqi
Najeeha Rehman

Department of Mass Communication

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Maleeha Noor
Erum Hayat
Sofia Naz
Mohammad Khurram Sadiq

Shabana
Sana Abbas
Mohammad Asif
Saeed-ul-Haq
Shams-ul-Haq
Huma Iqbal
Sana Iqbal
Xaria Jalil
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Irum Malik
Hamid Ali
Javed Ali
Sadaf
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Sarah Hussain
Nazia Aftab
Almas
Mubashir
Ubaid-ur-Rehman
Shahid Abbas
Aafaq Muhammed
Nazia
Imtiaz Ali

Sidra Mazher
Mehvish Saeed
Shahid Abbas
Abdur Rehman
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Jamalwash
Shazia
Mehrunisa
Sabeeqa

Abid
Ayesha Sajid
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Ghulam Muhammed
Ambreen Hussain
Sana Shawani
Meraj
Durdana Naseer
Mubarak Shah
Imran Alvi
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Sajida Anwer
Imran Saeed
Raheel Mehmood
Bilal Mukhtar
Sahar Aslam
Wajeeha Sabahat
Kausar Batool
Sadia Shahid
Faiza Idrees
Wajeeha Idrees
M Raffay Farooq
Sadia Shahid
Zara Haider
Asif Shaukat
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Fahad Mehmood
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Shumaila Muzzafer
Mohd. Umar
Hasan Raza
Bushra Tanvir
Abdul Rehman
Rabia Ali
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Adnan Jehangir
Areen Saleem
Fawad Awan
Shafqat Mehmood
Madiha Zafar
Sabeen Riaz
Faheem Ahmed
Naeem Shafi
Aamna Shah
Fatima Farooq
Kamran Asghar
Sara Anis
Bushra Tanvir
Fawad Awan