

7. “What about men?” Working with men for women’s empowerment and gender equality

Interests and needs



- The Circles of Learning on Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality in Agriculture which took place in early 2009 in [Uganda](#), Ghana, and Mozambique brought to light the interest of staff and partners to engage men in processes of women’s empowerment in the context of agriculture. This reflected the interest expressed during the agriculture portfolio review undertaken under *A Place to Grow*¹.
- Overall, agriculture and natural resources sectors have typically focused on “gender roles”, “women’s participation” or “women’s access to agricultural information and services” as approaches to addressing gender equality and women’s empowerment. Very little has been done on “masculinities” or “engaging men” in relation to addressing gender inequalities in agriculture.
- CARE’s CARE2SHARE [Gender Wiki](#) highlights “[Masculinities](#)” as a key area to address. It includes a number of resources both from CARE and from external organizations, including CARE’s Strategic Impact Inquiry reviewed projects across all sectors, including agriculture and natural resources.

Promising practices



- CARE’s [Strategic Impact Inquiry](#) began the process of exploring “masculinities” in relation to women’s empowerment across CARE’s portfolio. Specific studies were undertaken in Uganda and Bangladesh. Elsewhere, CARE has supported research in Bolivia and ex-Yugoslavia on masculinities and women’s empowerment.
- The Sustainable Farming Systems Extension (FASE) project Northern Region, Ghana is credited as having helped men understand “that women have useful ideas and must be listened to.” According to a men’s focus group in Bowku, even though they were previously aware about women’s empowerment, it was CARE’s interventions over the past six to seven years that helped “place things in perspective.” Specifically, they highlighted CARE’s sponsorship [of men and women] to attend seminars on women’s empowerment and how this had led to changed perceptions. Through this, men noted that women had virtually been “given a voice” and that “they [the men] had relaxed in [holding onto] their entrenched positions.” They felt this also led to an exchange of ideas among community men and women that brought about “positive outcomes such as improved farming practices.” They indicated that “previously, women could not contribute or provide solutions when there were problems on the farms, even though they spent longer periods working on the farm.”¹
- CARE Mozambique’s Sustainable and Effective Economic Development (SEED) project tries to identify men who can act as “positive deviants” or role models when it comes to supporting efforts on women’s empowerment and gender equality. They also work with men and women to explore the gender and power dynamics of intra-household decision-making processes.
- Outside CARE, [Farm Radio International](#) has worked with collaborators to develop a number of scripts which are broadcast in local languages. One of the recent projects, “The Love Letter Project” had scripts which focused on raising men’s awareness in rural areas of their role in supporting their wives throughout pregnancy and childbirth (e.g. visiting antenatal clinics, health and nutrition support, etc.).
- The agriculture sector can build on the good practices emerging in other (related) sectors – specifically, work is emerging around HIV and AIDS that addresses masculinities. It is within this realm that a lot of the work has been done to develop appropriate training materials oriented towards working with men on women’s empowerment. The Resources section includes a few of the many good resources available. Use your internet’s search engine to find other resources.

¹ *A Place to Grow* was supported by the H.G. Buffett Foundation. This collection was prepared by Catherine Hill, Lead Consultant for the project.

- [Promundo](#)ⁱⁱ has developed Project H which builds on a framework of “gender conscientization.” The organization works with the following themes: sexual and reproductive health; violence and violence prevention (including gender-based violence prevention); reasons and emotions, focusing on young men and mental health issues including communication skills, dialogue, emotional intelligence and substance use; fatherhood and caregiving, encouraging young men to look at their roles as caregivers in the family; and HIV and AIDS.

Idea for action: Look to CARE’s initiatives outside the agriculture sector



- Look to CARE initiatives outside the agriculture sector for support on experiences or approaches for engaging community men in processes aimed at greater empowerment for women and girls.

Idea for action: Partner with organizations outside agriculture



- Become familiar with the objectives and initiatives of other local organizations that may be involved in engaging men in processes of women’s empowerment. Think about organizations working on HIV and AIDS, reproductive health, women’s rights, women and law, women’s property and inheritance rights, etc.

Idea for action: Form a reading/discussion group with colleagues/partners



- Set up a formal or informal “discussion group” with colleagues and/or partners to meet on a regular basis (to be decided amongst the group). Use the resources listed below as a starting point. There may also be good resources in your CARE Country Office or other CARE project offices. There may also be organizations other than CARE that have good resources on approaches to engaging men and boys in women’s empowerment/rights initiatives. Much of the development of approaches is being undertaken by organizations working on women’s reproductive rights, HIV and AIDS, and gender-based violence. Use experiences from the field that you are witnessing, experiencing, or use different readings as topics for discussion. Use these to reflect on your own situations at work, in your organizational or in your personal life. Discuss, develop and implement strategies for strengthening your project/program’s work in this area.

Idea for action: Develop cases for use in community theatre, agricultural fairs, farmers’ days



- Develop your own “case studies” for use with men and women farmers based on some of the issues that are arising in your work in relation to engaging men and boys, for instance, around women’s empowerment, strengthening women’s ‘voice’ in decision-making processes at the household and community levels, gender-based violence. Try working with communities to develop these into community theatre pieces. Work with other community-based organizations (CBOs) in the area with experience in this area if possible. Again, much of the experience in this area is emerging from work on HIV and AIDS and reproductive rights. Include a community theatre piece in an agricultural fair or farmers’ days or other similar community sharing event.

Resources



Barker, Gary, Nascimento, Christine Ricardo and Marcio Segundo. *The individual and the political: Promundo’s evolving approaches in engaging young men in transforming masculinities.* Symposium paper prepared for ‘*Politicising Masculinities: Beyond the Personal*’: An international symposium linking lessons from HIV, sexuality and reproductive health with other areas for rethinking AIDS, gender and development. Dakar, Senegal 15-18th October, 2007. http://www.siyanda.org/docs/Barker_promundo.doc

Bhasin, Kamla. *Gender workshops with men: Experiences and reflections.* In Sweetman, C. (ed.) *Men’s involvement in gender and development policy and practice: Beyond rhetoric: Oxfam Working Paper Series, Oxford, 2001.* The paper presents the authors’ experiences conducting “gender training” over twenty or more years and highlights how the author has addressed the issues of working with women and men and questioning qualities which have been assigned to women and men as well as power dynamics.

<http://www.brad.ac.uk/acad/dppc/gender/mandmweb/kbhasintext.html>

CARE2SHARE Gender Wiki (CARE), Gender, violence, and exploitation. This section of CARE’s Gender Wiki provides a number of CARE and other resources that look at the issues of gender-based violence and exploitation – ranging from research to action-oriented materials. <http://gender.care2share.wikispaces.net/Gender%2C+Violence+and+Exploitation>

CARE2SHARE’s Gender Wiki also includes a **Masculinities Theme Group**. This includes a number of resources highlighting CARE’s experiences engaging men in women’s empowerment processes across different sectors in different countries.

<http://gender.care2share.wikispaces.net/Masculinities+Theme+Group>

Engender Health and Planned Parenthood Association South Africa. *Men as partners: A program for supplementing the training of life skills educators* (2nd edition), 2001.

Esplen, Emily and Alan Greig with inputs from Andrea Cornwall and Jerker Edstrom. *Politicising masculinities: Beyond the personal*, Institute of Development Studies (IDS), 2007. In October 2007, a diverse group of practical academics, policy-makers, practitioners, and activists met in Dakar, Senegal, to debate issues of men, gender and power: The gathering provided an opportunity to inform and inspire a greater engagement by men in the struggle for gender justice and broader social change. The process undertaken and the content addressed is applicable to the work that CARE is embarking on with women and men across the agricultural sector. The exercises undertaken to discuss the issues provide excellent examples that can be adapted under by Country Offices and agricultural projects and programs and their partners to more effectively engage men in the process of women's empowerment. To download the document, go to: http://www.siyanda.org/docs/esplen_greig_masculinities.pdf

Farm Radio International. The Farm Radio International has developed numerous scripts to support local radio in distributing information on a number of issues related to agriculture, resource management, local knowledge, property and inheritance rights. They cover economic, technical, health, and social issues, many of which are relevant to men's roles and responsibilities. The scripts included are intended for adaption to the local context. One example of a script can be found under ***The Love Letter Project***. http://farmradio.org/english/radio-scripts/87-8script_en.asp

In 2001, the **African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET)** created a network of male activists against gender-based violence. The network, "Men for Gender Equality Now" (MEGEN) has undertaken training and community mobilisation, working with Kenyans to challenge the unequal power relations existing between men and women. This document shares the experiences of the members and trainers and reflects upon their reflect on their own change processes. <http://www.eldis.org/go/topics/resource-guides/gender&id=44069&type=Document>

Ruxton, Sandy. *Gender equality and men: Learning from practice*, Oxfam, 2004.

To view particular chapters, go to the main site at: http://publications.oxfam.org.uk/oxfam/add_info_003.asp

To download the whole publication, go to:

http://www.oxfam.org.uk/what_we_do/resources/downloads/gem-23.pdf

ⁱ Contact CARE Ghana for more information.

ⁱⁱ In part, Promundo worked with [CARE in the Balkans](#) as part of this work.