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ENGAGING MEN IN WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTIONS AN ILO-WED ISSUE BRIEF¹

Highlights from the brief:

- ▶ The importance of engaging men -at the household, community and policy levels- in interventions on women's economic empowerment (WEE) and women's entrepreneurship development (WED) is gaining increasing recognition amongst development practitioners.
- ▶ Existing interventions seeking to engage men in WEE and WED have either targeted men as “gatekeepers” to gender equality or as potential agents of change in challenging established gender norms.
- ▶ Good practices of engaging men in WEE and WED include: carrying out gender assessments; providing capacity-building activities encouraging men to adopt positive masculinities; inviting men to the trainings targeting women; combining single-sex and mixed activities; identifying and supporting gender champions; campaigning.
- ▶ There is room for more implementation and scaling up of interventions engaging men in WEE and WED. Better monitoring and evaluation of interventions is essential to inform future programming.

¹ - This issue brief is based on a first version developed by Mary E. Robbins, a gender and development consultant and researcher specialized in women's economic empowerment and engaging men and boys. Amélie Duval, ILO-WED junior technical officer, provided the final substantive contributions and edits with guidance from Virginia Rose-Losada and Sara Cavallo from the ILO-WED programme. Invaluable inputs were provided to previous drafts by Gary Barker, Aletheia Donald, Nathalie Guilbert, Racheal Pierrotti and Hilde Wallacher.

Introduction

Female-run businesses are steadily increasing in number all over the world. According to the World Bank, there are about 8 million to 10 million formal small and medium enterprises with at least one female owner in developing countries. Women are making significant contributions to national economies, contributing to poverty reduction and employment creation. The potential of women entrepreneurship development is attracting more and more attention from international organizations, governments, and international development stakeholders.

Despite this growing momentum, women around the world still face discrimination and gender barriers that prevent them from unleashing their full economic potential. In order to promote greater gender equality, economic empowerment and entrepreneurship development interventions have thus focused on women, hoping to challenge the gender norms that put them at an economic disadvantage in comparison with men.

Entrepreneurship development programs that target women are sometimes failing to promote sustainable gender equality (Keonig et al., 2003). Because of the complexity of gender identities and relationships, they may sometimes even lead to negative impacts on their beneficiaries. For example, Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) and Entrepreneurship Development (WED) interventions may sometimes lead to an increase in gender-based violence from husbands and male household members (Ahmed, 2005). This type of response from men can stem from a feeling that women's economic empowerment and greater financial independence are a threat to their masculinity and/or the status quo that favours them.

This highlights the importance of better understanding men and masculinities, and

of actively engaging men in gender equality. Researchers working on these topics have underlined the importance of engaging men towards gender equality, and of going beyond a gender-sensitive approach, that recognizes the specific needs and realities of men based on the social construction of gender roles, towards a gender-transformative one (Barker, 2007). Gender transformative programs seek to transform gender roles and promote more gender-equitable relationships between men and women. They recognize the complexity and fluidity of gender identities, and the fact that men can also benefit from gender equality.

Men can indeed benefit from greater gender equality, as for example the pressure of being the main breadwinner of the household is lifted and they build healthier relationships with their wives and children. Moreover, they have a role to play in women's economic empowerment. In a world in which they often still benefit from what R. W. Connell called the "patriarchal dividend"², they can act as real gatekeepers towards the implementation of greater gender equality, by helping their female family members to access resources that are essential to their economic empowerment or the start-up and growth of their businesses.

The purpose of this issue brief is to explore the issue of men's engagement in interventions focusing on WEE and WED.

Questions guiding this brief were the following:

- ▶ How can and have men been involved in these types of interventions?
- ▶ What are some good practices that can be reproduced in future programming?
- ▶ And finally, what are future areas that need to be considered and explored?

2 - The patriarchal dividend refers to the advantage that all men have in a society that, openly or otherwise, favours males, maleness or masculinity (Connell, 2013 in Sweetman, 2013).

Most of the evidence and research on men's engagement in development interventions aiming to promote gender equality has been around health-related issues, for example on HIV/AIDS prevention or on gender-based violence. Rigorous evaluations of WED interventions engaging men are few. However, a few cases of evaluations of projects attempting to engage men and boys in WEE interventions do exist, and will be referred to below. The main focus of this brief will be on projects

implemented in Africa, though the limited evidence has led us to include some interventions from other countries in the Global South³.

This brief will seek out to draw good practices from both the existing literature on men's engagement in gender equality and specific interventions aiming to empower women economically and to develop women's entrepreneurship, and to make recommendations for future interventions.

Approaches to engaging men in women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurship development

From the existing literature and intervention evaluations on engaging men in WEE and WED, three levels of interventions can be identified. The different approaches to engaging men at the household, community and policy levels are detailed below.

Engaging men at the family and household level.

Some programs have set out to involve men as **direct support** in their wives or female relative's economic empowerment or business. This approach aims to take advantage of the skills, knowledge and networks that male family members have to support their female relative's economic empowerment.

Male family members can act as economic empowerment "gatekeepers" for women, by giving them access to capital, information, and networks that would otherwise remain out of their reach because of context-specific gender barriers. A study conducted by the Gender Innovation Lab in 2014 in Uganda showed the crucial role of fathers and husbands in

the likeliness of women crossing over to male-dominated sectors. It also showed that these crossover firms outperformed others in traditional female sectors, both in terms of profits and size of firms by the number of employees (Alibhai et al., 2015). Crossover firms were indeed more likely to report having started their business due to an opportunity provided by their husband, while a father's occupation seemed to have a strong influence on a woman's likelihood of crossing over, thanks to them providing start-up funds for a business or initiating introductions to contacts in male-dominated industries.

Another way to involve men in their wives or female relatives' business is to invite male family members and husbands to business related trainings targeting women. This can help them understand what their household has to gain from their wives' businesses and how they can support them. In a project delivering gender and business training for female clients of a microfinance institution in northern Vietnam over a period of 9-month (Vu et al., 2015), husbands were invited to

3 - Africa was identified as the main region of preference given ILO's current work in women's entrepreneurship development and engaging men within an IrishAid funded project in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. Additionally there is little work in Latin America and Asia that evaluate the impact of involving men in WEE or WED.

join the training – especially its gender modules. The results of an impact assessment showed that involving men had some positive impacts from a business perspective: it led to more sales and profits and a higher number of start-ups. From a gender perspective, it also led to less relational frictions in the household, and had a positive impact of female decisions about important purchases.

In order to engage men in WEE and WED interventions, some programs have directly targeted family members and husbands with **specific trainings aiming at challenging established gender norms**. The goal is to encourage mutual understanding between household members and behavioural change for men to support their wives, or other female relatives in their economic empowerment or their business creation. The promotion of positive masculinities can lead to the creation of healthier relationships, and a more gender equal division of tasks.

The primary goal of some interventions seeking to engage men has been to decrease gender-based violence. For example, the aim of a project implemented by the International Rescue Committee in Côte d'Ivoire in 2010 (Gupta et al., 2014) was to economically empower women beneficiaries of Village Saving Loans Associations and to reduce intimate partner violence in 24 villages affected by conflict in rural north and northwest Côte d'Ivoire. Half of the groups in each participating village took part in Gender Dialogue Groups during which women and their spouses were brought together to reflect on how economic decisions were made within the household, the characteristics of a successful household and guided through steps to develop mutually respectful and nonviolent spousal dynamics. Following the combined interventions, women reported a significant reduction in intimate partner violence within the last year, reduced economic abuse⁴ from their partners and an overall alteration of attitudes regarding the justification and ac-

ceptance of intimate partner violence of all women in the study.

Other interventions have led to a more gender equal division of tasks inside the household, where men take on some of women's domestic responsibilities such as household chores or parenting.

One of the reasons that women entrepreneurs do not perform as well as male entrepreneurs is because they are often the sole care-giver in the household: they are responsible for taking care of other family members and domestic chores. This not only means that they do not have as much time as their male counterparts to devote to their businesses, but also that they invest more financially in household well-being than men do on average. There is some evidence that micro-credit loans do not benefit female businesses as it does male businesses because the money ends up being diverted to the household instead of the business (ILO-WED, 2015).

For example, a Village Savings and Loans intervention in Rwanda in 2012, implemented by CARE Rwanda (Slegh et al., 2013), delivered a training for men including structured group discussion and training activities on business skills and health and well-being (including sessions focusing on negotiation and decision-making between women and men and a cycle of workshops in household activities). The qualitative evaluation from the intervention indicated that patterns of sharing care work had changed. One man said: "I learned that I can do women's work, and my wife can do man's work" (p23) and other participants reported increased sharing of domestic tasks.

Engaging men at the community level.

Gender roles and identities play out not only at the individual and household level, they

⁴ - Economic abuse was measured with three indicators: 1. A partner taking a woman's money against her will, 2. A partner refusing money for household necessities and 3. A partner obliging a woman to give part or all her money to him.

are also inscribed and enacted in the wider community and society. For sustainable change in terms of engaging men in WED, it is essential to promote gender equality and women's economic empowerment at the community level.

Community campaigns to raise awareness at the local level can be a strong tool to change gender attitudes and behaviours at the community level. An intervention led by the Brazilian NGO Instituto Promundo in 2012-2013 included group education and community engagement for women enrolled in the conditional cash transfer program Bolsa Familia and their male family members to help address wider issues of women's economic empowerment and positively engage men as to transform traditional gender norms and support women's economic participation and growth (Veras Soares & Silva, 2010). After following bi-weekly gender-education sessions for five months, male and female participants were required to develop a community campaign with messages around what they had learned as a means of sensitizing all community members. Using flyers, banners and pamphlets, the community campaign was disseminated near football pitches, the Residents Association, restaurants and other public spaces reaching more than 5,000 community members. The campaign also included organizing social events like football, bingo and a theatre show. This type of intervention not only allows for the dissemination of messages promoting more positive masculinities, but it also leads men to take ownership of what they have learned through the training.

To promote gender equality at the community level, some interventions have set out to involve and empower male gender equality champions. Fauzia Ahmed (2008) has argued that women's economic empowerment initiatives could "use men to change other men," by identifying those men who are supportive of women's empowerment, and to empower

those men as change agents to reach other men in the community and to change community norms (Sleggh et al., 2013, p23). An example of such an intervention is the one carried out by CARE Burundi and other partners to support the Abatangumaco group (Wallacher, 2012). Its origin is a group of rural Burundian men who had begun to question their traditional way of life, and more specifically their practices of domestic abuse, economic violence, and unequal share of the burden of work. Collaboration between these men and CARE Burundi led to building the organizational structure of the group and to design its outreach activities. Though this community-based movement does not focus on women's economic empowerment but more on gender-based violence and gender equality in general, it seeks to engage men in questioning traditional gender norms and practices. Men from the group talk to other men through public interactions or peer-to-peer interventions. Identifying male gender equality champions –individuals or groups- and empowering them to engage with other men and promote gender equality is a powerful way to encourage sustainable change for gender equality.

Engaging men at the policy level.

The evidence regarding involving men in WEE and WED interventions at the policy level is not yet very well developed. This also stems from the fact that interventions focusing on engaging men are still scarce and not up to scale (Barker et al., 2007). There is however some evidence that even if laws promoting gender equality are in place, their impact in reality can be very limited (Sweetman, 2013). Hence the need for policies which promote positive masculinities and men's support of women's economic empowerment.

Laws that promote men's involvement in the education of children can for example contribute to the promotion of different masculinities and bring better indirect support for women's economic empowerment. One

6 - <http://www.heforshe.org/>

example of such a law from a non-nordic country is Costa Rica's Responsible Paternity Law, which included awareness-raising campaigns and public support for mothers to request DNA testing from men. The law led to a decline in the number of children with unrecognized paternity- from 29,3% in 1999 to 7,8 % in 2003 (Hegg et al., 2005 in Barker et al., 2007).

The HeForShe campaign, launched in September 2014 by UNWomen, seeks to engage

men globally towards gender equality. Its aim is to engage 1 million men and boys by July 2015, this engagement being sanctioned by men and boy's registration on the HeForShe campaign website⁶. The website also includes implementation plans for UN agencies, individuals, civil societies and universities. Such a campaign aims to have a transformative impact beyond the individual level, on the global policy level, and has gained the support of policy-makers as influential as Barack Obama or Ban Ki-Moon.

Useful tools and strategies to engage men in WEE and WED

Several tools and strategies to engage men in WEE and WED interventions can be drawn from the interventions mentioned above and the broader literature. Finally, as it can be difficult to engage men in certain activities, a list of ways to incentivize their participation is given.

- 1) **Gender assessments.** Gender identities are by definition complex, fluid, and very context-specific. In order to design a relevant gender-transformative intervention, it is essential to carry out a thorough gender assessment of the community in which the intervention will take place. This assessment will allow understanding why men may be resistant to their female family members' economic empowerment but also how they could best support them. It should also guide the design of an adapted project response, targeting men's specific needs and engaging them effectively.
- 2) **Capacity building activities.** They are a useful tool in encouraging men to adopt positive masculinities. They can take the form of trainings, workshops, discussion groups etc. and their main aim would be to trigger behavioural change so that men become more supportive of WEE

and WED. These activities may focus on a range of issues such as gender attitudes, gender-based violence, division of household chores and caretaking, relationships and sexual health etc.

- 3) **Inviting men to the trainings targeting women.** This strategy helps mitigate the jealousy that projects solely targeting women may sometimes trigger for male family members. It can lead to a better understanding and recognition of their female family members' economic activity. It can also encourage men to see the benefit of women's economic activity for the household as a whole, and thus trigger their active support for their wives' business.
- 4) **Combining single-sex and mixed activities.** Interventions have used single-sex discussion groups for certain topics, such as sexual behaviours or alcohol consumption for example, thus creating a safe space in which men and women could express their concerns freely. In order to encourage better communication and shared decision-taking between household members, mixed sessions have also been used and have shown positive results.

Box 1. Incentives for men to attend the activities

One of the challenges in engaging men and boys in WEE and WED interventions is to find the right incentives for them to participate in activities that might challenge them in their vision of masculinity. Projects sometimes have had to come up with innovative ways to incentivize them, some of which are listed below.

- ▶ Linking the activities with typical moments of male socialization was the strategy adopted by Promundo in Brazil. They linked men's workshops with weekly football matches. Men only received equipment for matches/tournaments and were allowed to join teams playing after having participated in a gender education session. This mechanism promoted accountability for individual men, as well as between teammates and teams.
- ▶ Financial incentives were sometimes necessary to get men to attend the trainings. For example, a certain amount of money was given out to men in the microfinance intervention in Vietnam.
- ▶ Men's attendance tends to be higher when they feel that the topics are of interest to them. For example, they might be more interested in the business and economic empowerment trainings than in the gender discussions. Framing the activities in a way that will be appealing to the men, and drawing from the information gathered from a preliminary gender assessment to do so, is therefore essential.
- ▶ Taking into account the schedules of participants is essential. Making activities available on evenings and week-ends, outside of work hours, is important to ensure that men can attend the activities. When both husbands and wives are involved in the activities, it is crucial to provide childcare for children, so that all members of the household are able to attend the training.

5) Identifying and bring further support to male gender champions. This can be done at all three levels -household, community and policy- along with building gender champions' capacity to advocate for WEE and WED interventions and male support. Moreover, it also contributes to the sustainability of such interventions. These gender champions can be individual men, such as community leaders or gender-equality allies, or male-targeted NGOs promoting positive masculinities and gender equality. They can be at the household, community or at the policy level.

6) Campaigning. This strategy allows the promotion of positive masculinities, including through shining light on male gender champions at the local and global levels. It is possible to use new technologies such as social media, and also to use more traditional means of dissemination, such as flyers, signs, banners. Combinations of public events to trigger discussion in the community, such as theatre pieces and football matches, with more targeted interventions such as door-to-door campaigning or peer-to-peer discussions have been used.

Recommendations for engaging men in WEE and WED

Understand context-specific gender dynamics to ensure that men play a positive role in WEE and WED. Finding the balance in engaging men without allowing them to over-power women focused programming is essential. Conducting a gender assessment at different levels –household, community, and policy- will allow to identify existing cultural, religious, institutional practices that can be leveraged or not in project implementation. Moreover, at the stage of project implementation and after the project is finished, close monitoring and evaluation of male engagement components is necessary to understand how the interventions should be later scaled up.

Devote larger efforts to developing tools and strategies that engage men in WEE and WED. Governments, organizations and other stakeholders should devote larger efforts and resources to develop tools and strategies to engage men at household, community and policy levels, in WEE and WED. This would enable moving beyond income-based returns for women and lead to a more sustainable change towards gender equality. Tools and strategies can include training materials, manuals for facilitators, online courses and community activities/

campaigns to support men's inclusion in WEE and WED efforts.

Start young. Younger men and women embrace greater gender equality (IMAGES, 2010)⁷. The examples of Brazil and South Africa reflect interventions that specifically target boys and young men. It is important to engage boys and young men as early as possible, especially for future generations of female entrepreneurs and business owners.

Include all male family members. Project implementation should strive to engage all male family members, and not only the husband. Interventions in Côte d'Ivoire and Brazil have considered that every generation of males can play a role in transforming gender dynamics at the household level. This allows being more inclusive of households in which the spouse or male family member can't participate in interventions due to work schedules and of female-led households that have no partner or husband present. At project level, and based on the preliminary needs-assessment, projects can look to involve men of different ages and connections to women including boys, adolescents, adults, seniors, sons, brothers, cousins and neighbours.

Future areas to consider and explore

The need for better monitoring and evaluation of changes. More evidence is needed on the impact men and their involvement can have of women's economic empowerment and their entrepreneurial activities both at the policy, community and household level. There is also a need for better evidence on what combination of interventions is most impactful. Understanding and measuring the impact of male engagement in WEE and WED

initiatives will show what specific aspects of an intervention (community engagement vs. couples dialogue groups) have the largest impact on gender equality, violence, household relations and ultimately, support women as income generators and entrepreneurs. Building a strong evidence base for policy makers and government leaders will establish what to do to successfully engage men in WEE and WED programming in the future.

7 - The International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) is one of the most comprehensive household studies on men's attitudes and practices – along with women's opinions and reports of men's practices – on a wide variety of topics related to gender equality. Reports are available: <http://promundoglobal.org/programs/international-men-and-gender-equality-survey-images/>

The need to create a solid theory of change. Stakeholders must take into account the resistance of social and cultural norms learned over time in order to create gender-transformative and holistic interventions that go beyond WEE and WED programming and engage men to become true allies in women's economic empowerment. Further research on ways to scale up existing strategies and tools engaging men and boys is needed.

Cost-effectiveness for international organizations and governments. More research is required on measuring the cost-effectiveness of interventions that engage men in WEE and WED initiatives. Governments as well need to explore the cost-effectiveness of macro-level policies that seek to engage men in supporting women's entrepreneurial activities and empowerment through national policies. While WEE and WED interventions with a male engagement component or at the household level may be more expensive in

the short run and not lead to overnight economic gains in terms of income generation and business performance, they may eventually have a longer, more sustainable impact.

Unpaid care work. It is important for governments, donors and international organizations to understand and address the issue of unpaid care work. The participation of women in labour markets and entrepreneurial activities are hindered by caregiving responsibilities. Some national policies and programs can be criticized for reinforcing these traditional gender norms. However governments also have the space to train government employees in the health, education and social assistance sectors on engaging men in care work at home so as to support women's economic participation outside the home. Additionally, organizations implementing interventions at the household level should take unpaid care work into account more.

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