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STUDY ON MASCULINE IDENTITIES AND MEN'S ROLES IN THE GAZA STRIP, PALESTINE

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Prepared by
Emma Swan

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Contact Information:

Emma Swan

PhD Candidate at the University of Ottawa and 2017
Pierre Elliott Trudeau Scholar
E-mail: eswan083@uottawa.ca

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SECTION 1

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

War, occupation and blockade make the attainment of traditional gender norms and roles difficult, if not impossible while also disrupting and producing new gender roles and norms. At the same time however, traditional expectations persist through individual and societal norms. For men, this has resulted in what some have called “thwarted masculinities”, or “frustrated masculinities”. That is, an inability to fulfill ones’ gender roles. As a result, this leads to feelings of inadequacy, frustration, and in some cases, increased gender-based violence (GBV) in an effort to reassert patriarchal control over family.

To date, there has been little research aiming to understand men and masculinities in the Gaza Strip. This is reflective of a global trend where gender is understood to mean women, while men and masculinities are subsequently ignored, and left uninvestigated. This is problematic because there is growing recognition both of the importance of engaging men and masculinities in gender work, but also the importance of context-specific and locally informed evidence based policy and programming.

Despite the importance of extending a gendered lens to the social and cultural lives of men and masculinities, a concentration on women remains important. We must remember that gender analysis is not zero-sum. That is to say, placing an emphasis on men and masculinities does not take away from the importance of focusing on women and girls. Rather, it enriches gender equality work and provides important contextual nuance, which ultimately leads to more sustainable and long-term change. Men must be understood as strategic partners in the goal toward gender equity and, therefore, women’s ‘critical others’ (Chopra, 2007, p.2).

STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

The report is structured in five parts. The first section provides an outline of what is meant by a ‘masculinities approach’. This section reviews some of the current literature and looks at why such an approach is necessary. The second section outlines the methodology and analysis tools used. The third section presents the findings of this research broken down into three sections which reflect the research questions. The fourth section explores some key entry points or ways of integrating findings before closing with recommendations.





SECTION 2

SECTION 2: WHAT IS A 'MASCULINITIES APPROACH' AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Over the last few decades, the development and humanitarian sector has seen a growing focus on gender. Notwithstanding the tremendous importance and transformative agendas embodied in international resolutions, frameworks, and platforms for action, the general consensus amongst feminist scholars and practitioners is that despite decades of efforts, we have yet to reach gender equality and many women around the world still lack their basic rights and are disproportionality represented in rates of poverty, unemployment, lack of education and food insecurity (Villellas, Urruita & Fisas, 2016; Hudson, 2013; Willett, 2010; Puechguirbal, 2010; Valasek & Nelson, 2006). With a clear consensus that gender equality was not being achieved at a satisfactory rate, the question then turned to why.

WHY HAVEN'T WE ACHIEVED EQUALITY?

One of the first things this exploration uncovered is that when notions of gender and gender equality are considered in policy and programming, the term gender is often equated with women (Cohn, Kinsella & Gibbings, 2004; Fisas, 2016; Myrntinen, Naujoks & El-Bushra, 2014; Villellas, Urrutia & Wright, 20014; Puechguirbal, 2010). By equating 'gender' with women, some development approaches, policy and programming may miss out on dynamics related to men and masculinities in gender equality work.

This blindness to the broader understanding of gender leaves us with an incomplete picture of gender relations because we know that men are just as 'gendered' as women are. This one-sided understanding of gender provides an incomplete understanding of gender issues in the context of development, this is particularly true in conflict settings (Kuehna & Sudhakar, 2011, p. 2). Consequently, the role that men play in promoting and perpetuating inequality and insecurity, as well as the impact of programs on men— and the impact that this then has on women— has rarely been analyzed. A further consequence of this exclusion of men from gender programming is that it suggests that men's bodies, attitudes and actions are both "natural" and "essential".

Current feminist literature argues that the concealed or 'invisible' nature of male power helps to maintain their established domination, control and power over women (Blanchard, 2003; Cockburn, 2010; Connell, 2005; Dowd, 2010; Hutchins, 2008; Moran, 2010; Whitworth, 2012; Sjoberg, 2009). Ultimately, the fact that much of the power that men enjoy male is often invisible and is embedded in the socially prescribed gender roles associated with being a man means that we need to pay specific attention to understanding—or 'uncovering'—the relationship between male gender roles and the perpetuation of unequal power relations between men and women. This uncovering is what is now being called a 'masculinities approach'. It is an approach that aims to explore the unseen and invisible aspects that shape gender relations. Practically, this means aiming to understand how men make sense of their duties, roles and responsibilities,



as well as how women make sense of men's duties, roles and responsibilities. It means taking the time to explore how men feel about a given intervention. It also means working with men to make them aware of the impacts of patriarchy not only on the lives of their wives, sisters, daughters, but also of the impacts of patriarchy on men themselves.

In the field of development and humanitarian programming and policy, paying attention to men and masculinities allows us to see the underlying gendered power hierarchy embedded in gender relations that thwart equal and sustainable development. If we fail to see and understand these power relations, they will remain intact.

A NEW WAVE OF FEMINIST ENQUIRY - MEN STREAMING

In order to achieve a more holistic understanding, considerations related to men and masculinities are now being integrated into programming and policy related to gender equality. In the same way as women's experiences or equality cannot be understood outside of men's experiences, contemporary scholars agree that 'masculine' cannot be understood as separate from, or be defined in opposition to, 'feminine'. Rather than seeing men as ungendered, we need to examine how their behavior is shaped by gender norms and expectations and how these roles and expectations influences theirs, and women's, experiences in development, humanitarian interventions and conflict environments (Hearn, 2003, p. xi).

The key points around masculinities can be summarized in the following considerations:

- 1)** There is no such thing as a singular "masculinity", different models or discourses co-exist. Therefore, it is useful to talk about 'masculinities' in the plural sense.
- 2)** Masculinities are not all valued equal by society, there is a hierarchy with 'hegemonic masculinity' being at the top.
- 3)** Although there are similarities related to men and masculinities around the world, masculinities are not static and are instead shaped by social expectations and contexts and are therefore context-specific and open to change.
- 4)** Progress on gender equality is impossible without taking into consideration gender relations and therefore masculinities, and engaging men in these efforts.

Lastly, a masculinities approach is not simply a methodological tool, but rather a mental structure and construction which understands that in any humanitarian intervention, women (in nearly all cases) start out from an unequal situation compared to men and that men too face gender specific limitations and that their engagement is crucial to the success of any intervention targeting women.







SECTION 3

SECTION 3: METHODOLOGY

DATA COLLECTION

Primary qualitative data was collected during three field visits to the Gaza Strip in the spring/summer of 2018. The fieldwork relied on focus group discussions, in-depth interviews and participant observation. In total, seventy-four (74) participants, thirty-nine (39) men and thirty-five (35) women, from the 5 administrative districts in Gaza were included in this research.

FOCUS GROUPS

Each focus group discussion lasted between 1h 45 mins to 2 hours. Five (5) focus group discussions were held throughout the Gaza Strip with 34 men and 22 women. Focus groups were digitally recorded and later transcribed. In addition to transcriptions, extensive notes were also taken during the focus groups.

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

Nineteen (19) in-depth interviews were conducted with 14 women and 5 men and lasted between 45 minutes to 1h 30 mins. In-depth interviews were held with local women's NGOs, associations, co-ops, legal aid clinics and service providers; mental health professionals and social workers; lawyers and Mukhtars; and Action Against Hunger staff members.

SECONDARY DATA

Secondary data was collected through a literature review of related documents, theoretical and academic literature and NGO reports related to the relationship between masculinity and gender equality in Gaza. This ensured the research was applying lessons learnt by other projects of a similar nature which not only ensured more efficient use of time, but ultimately led to more effective recommendations and programming reflecting Gazans needs.

ANALYSIS

The analysis of fieldwork is qualitative and quotes have been used throughout the report to help illustrate and personalize findings. When appropriate, findings have also been contextualized by referencing appropriate theory and by using other sources and findings from research projects conducted both in Gaza, and globally.

Qualitative data was interpreted through thematic analysis where a process of coding was used to create established, meaningful patterns of themes. The analysis was based on notes taken, and transcripts from focus group discussions and in-depth interviews.





SECTION 4

SECTION 4: FINDINGS

Findings of this research will be presented in three sections reflecting the main research aims:

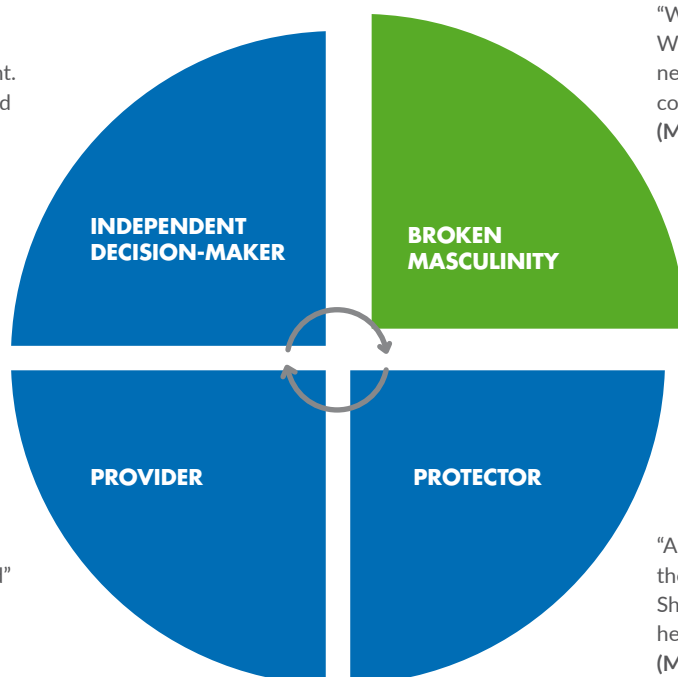
- 1)** Outline the four basic patterns or narratives of masculinities in Gaza;
- 2)** Examine how masculine gender identity relates to, and shapes, gender equality in the Gaza Strip; and
- 3)** Provide a model in order to summarize the state of masculinities in Gaza and the subsequent impact and importance for gender equality work.

1) BASIC PATTERNS OF MALE GENDER IDENTITY IN GAZA

Narratives of masculinity often stress men's role as providers and protectors. However, how these roles manifest, depends on the unique context in which men live. Findings from this study suggest that narratives of male gender identity in the Gaza Strip center on three characteristics: independent decision-maker, provider, and protector. The protracted crisis in Gaza, with repeated violent shocks, continued restrictions on freedom of movement, constrained productive capacities, and a lack of economic opportunities resulting in high unemployment and low household incomes, has made all three roles difficult, if not impossible. As a result, a fourth category of male gender identity has emerged; 'victim in crisis' or what we can call 'broken masculinity'. These four categories will be discussed below.

"A real man must have his own philosophy in life, in speech, in thought. He must be independent. He must have ultimate power and control in his house"
(Male focus group, Khan Yunis).

"When a man supports his wife financially, he feeds his manhood"
(Male focus group, Khan Yunis).



"We are not completely human. We cannot provide the basic needs for our family, we are not a complete human anymore"
(Male focus group, Khan Yunis)

"A woman cannot live without the protection of a man. She needs him to protect her in the streets and in life"
(Male focus group, northern Gaza).



INDEPENDENT DECISION MAKER

Narratives of a strong and independent man, a man who exhibits confidence, competence, certainty and authority can be understood as the root of male identity in Gaza from which other identity markers, or characteristics, are constructed. Independence was noted by multiple focus group discussants as the most important part of being a man. Male independence manifests in authority over family, household, community and one's own conduct.

"A real man must have his own philosophy in life, in speech, in thought. He must be independent. He must have ultimate power and control in his house, in a good way, not a bad way" (Male, focus group Khan Yunis).

As the above quote illustrates, men's perceptions of independence, are also expressed and viewed through an emphasis on autonomy, decision making, and agency. Not only was this repetitively expressed by male participants, it was also supported by female respondents. When asked about the ideal qualities of a man, one female focus group participant exclaimed,

"a real man has his own opinions and is not influenced by others, he has fixed opinions and not always changing" (Female focus group, Rafah).

Independence and autonomy in 'philosophy' and 'thought' was also closely related to independence and autonomy in relation to family matters and 'running' a household. This was internalized by men as needing to appear 'independent' in relation to their relationship to their wives.

"It is ok to help my wife if she really needs it, but only inside the house and if she is not telling anyone and nobody can see. People will gossip if they see, they will say I am controlled by my wife" (Male focus group, Khan Yunis).

Although independence and decision-making status is analogous with narratives of manhood, in a context such as Gaza, this narrative is given heightened importance due to the utter lack of control men have over many aspects of daily life. Often, when a person is rendered unable to fulfill an expectation or role, one of two things happen: the expectation or role changes, or more emphasis is given to the role and this can manifest in men's (and women's) increased desire for control, agency and ultimately independence. In the next section, we will discuss how this can be a challenge when working towards gender equality.



When asked what it means to be a man in Gaza, participants answered, “be the first one in charge”, “to decide on everything”, this decision-making role was directly linked to what they saw as men’s long-standing roles as providers.

PROVIDER

Despite the economic hardships faced by residents of Gaza, masculinity remains strongly tied to the breadwinner identity and is primarily embodied by financially providing for one’s family. As one focus group discussant shared,

***“When a man supports his wife financially, he feeds his manhood”
(Male focus group, Khan Yunis).***

The momentous importance placed on male providing and breadwinning was evident in the various ways male participants protected their monopoly over their role as provider and breadwinner. Focus groups and interviews identified three leading ways men justify this monopoly: 1) through religion; 2) a biological justification, and 3) an argument based on honor.

Outside of social and cultural pressure for a husband to provide for his family in Gaza, this pressure is also present in religious doctrine. In the Qur’an, the concept of harm (darar) in Islamic law is understood to include a husband’s failure to provide obligatory financial support (nafaqa) for his wife. Therefore, addressing men’s identification with breadwinning, requires engaging not only in efforts to shift social and cultural norms, but also in calls for a deeper understanding and interpretation of Islamic teachings.

In addition to religious justifications, men also called on social constructed stereotypes for why they should be the breadwinner. They argued that women are weaker and not capable of working and therefore, she is unsuitable for being the family breadwinner. Moreover, it was often mentioned that women were too emotional and often changed their minds, they were not reliable. Discussions around the topic of women being ‘capable’ of working were highly sensitive and at one point, the translator noted, “I think he is so angry talking about this that he might break the table!”. Some men were very hostile to the idea that men and women were equals. These men expressed the view that women were weaker than men, that they could not work outside the home, especially not in agriculture because physically, it would be too much for her and “she would get exhausted”. For these men therefore, the conventional division of labor with women working in the home and men working outside of the home, is a “natural” outgrowth of such differences in physical ability, resilience, and strength. One focus group discussant explained,



“I don’t want my wife working outside the house, projects inside are better, because if she is outside, I worry for her to get exhausted in the sun and also the travel. It is very tiring and exhausting, it is a lot of pressure for women because then she must come home and has her responsibilities at home” (Male focus group, Khan Yunis).

Not all respondents were as reliant on religious or biological justification for their discrimination. One respondent for example, said that he would be fine with his wife working on his land or participating in a farming project on his land, but not the land of someone else (as is often seen in some cash-for-work programs). He said,

“If my wife was working on my land, I would bring her water and tea. I would be very glad for her. But not if she is working for someone else’s land. This is shame” (Male focus group, Khan Yunis).

Here, he relied on a sense of honor (or ownership) to justify his discrimination. Honor is closely related to a sense of ownership over his wife. How this shapes family dynamics, distribution of labor and decision-making power within a family will be discussed in the following section. Participants often commented on the belief that because men are responsible for providing for their family, they are also responsible for protecting their family and making the decisions. This lead us to the role of protector.

PROTECTOR

Closely connected to men’s role as provider, narratives of men being the ‘protector’ also emerge. The role of protector was mentioned in relation to both physically protecting one’s family, such as providing shelter and making household decisions related to the wellbeing and survival of the family, but also socially protecting one’s family in terms of being the guardian of women’s honor and reputation (as mentioned above in relation to ownership). This protector role is instilled in boys from a young age where brothers are expected to have authority over their sisters, even if they are younger than the sister. This guardianship, or protector role, is then carried into adulthood and marriage.

When exploring this side of male gender roles, many respondents cited the verse in chapter 4, verse 34 from the Qur’an, “Men are guardians and managers over women” (al-Qur’an, 4:34). This verse is understood not only to refer to women, but also to the household and family.

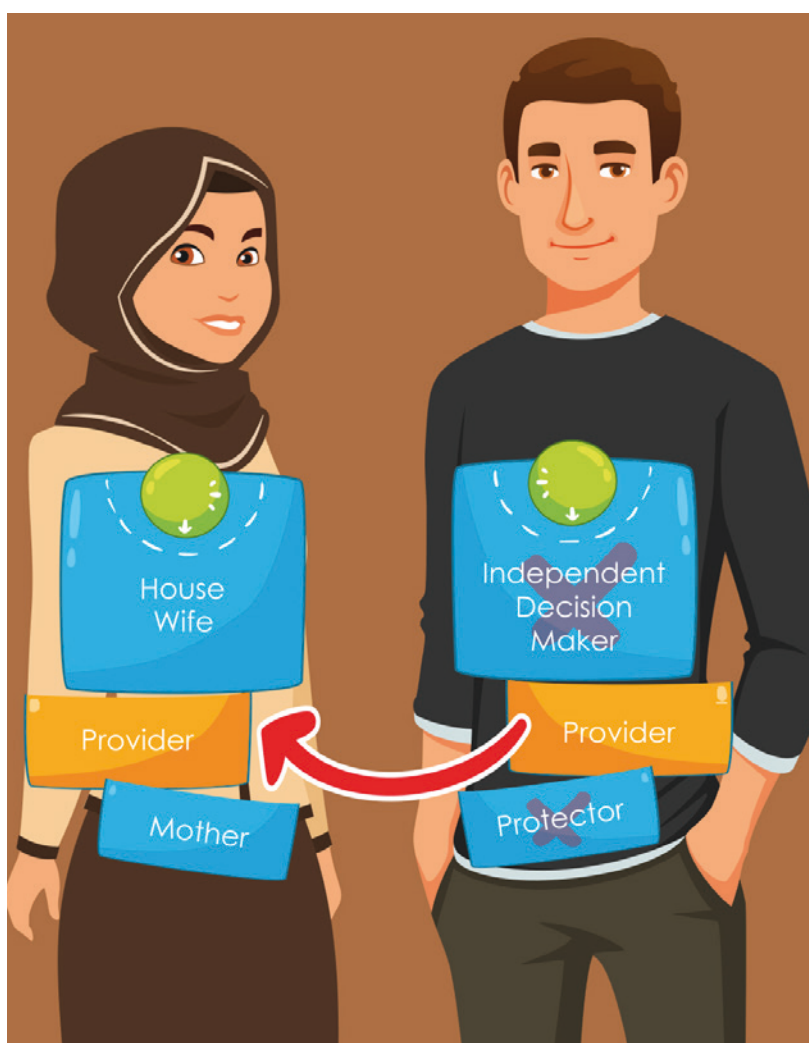
A male focus group participant from the north of Gaza explained, “the most important thing for a man is taking care of his family”. Taking care of, or protecting, his family has an interesting connotation in regard to guardianship of women. Through this role, men are seen to protect the honor and reputation of a woman;



"A woman cannot live without the protection of a man. She needs him to protect her in the streets and in life" (Male focus group, northern Gaza).

When asked what is meant by 'in the streets', the respondent explained that it was a man's responsibility to protect his female family members from other men's harassment,

If I need groceries, I will send my sons. It would be ok to ask my young daughter but not the older ones. [why?] Because my older daughters could be exposed to harassment in the street if their brother is not there (Female focus group, Rafah).



Appreciating the social pressures placed on men to protect the honor of females is crucial in understanding men's monopoly on decision making power and also local constructions and understanding of gender equality. This will be discussed in the next section.

When men were asked about the qualities of an ideal man in Gaza, they responded that the ideal man must "have power and control over his house, in a good way, not a bad way" (Male focus group, Khan Yunis). The last part of his sentence is interesting, 'in a good way, not in a bad way'. Despite the prevalence of domestic violence and GBV acknowledged in focus groups and interviews, participants nevertheless maintained that being a 'good man' required men to have control over his family and household as a means of



protecting it. It was framed as a duty of love. The juxtaposition is that this desire, this duty of love, comes up against a crippling economic crisis in Gaza along with a perpetual state of insecurity, never knowing when the next bomb will fall, electricity will be cut, or salary will be withheld. This reality of insecurity often results in men's inability to protect their families which combines with the expectation of men to provide for their families. Lacking the ability to protect—and provide for—their families, men are left feeling frustrated and humiliated. The paradox being, in interviews and discussion, many men (and women) cited this inability to provide and protect their family as the crux of their frustration which leads to them perpetrating violence on their wives and children. This sets the stage for the last narrative of masculinity in Gaza; 'victim in crisis' or 'broken masculinity'.

'BROKEN MASCULINITY'

Due to the interrelated nature of identity markers such as independent decision maker, provider, and protector, and men's inability to fulfil these gender roles or narratives of masculinity in Gaza, has made the foundation of male identity less certain. Furthermore, new discourses of gender equality, combined with an increase of women in the paid labor force, further challenge the ascribed dimensions of male authority, leaving many men feeling insecure in Gaza. This evolution of the context of masculinity has resulted in what some have called 'masculinity nostalgia' (MacKenzie & Foster, 2017), 'thwarted masculinities' (Moore, 1994), 'masculinity in crisis' (Yaish, 2009), or what we can call 'broken masculinity'.

"Nowadays, women have more value than men because men are useless, they have no jobs and can't protect their family" (Male focus group, northern Gaza)

The above quote illustrates how a man's inability to be a provider and protector reduces him to feeling as though he were 'less' than a woman.

"I used to be a leader back when I had a job. Now I have no opportunities, no one listens to me because they don't respect me" (Male focus group, northern Gaza).

This position of helplessness has become a new facet of masculinity in Gaza due primarily to the crippling economic situation which, in 2017, had led to an unemployment rate of 44%, one of the highest in the world.

"I used to make 3,500 shekel a month. Now I have to survive off of charity and my neighbors. I feel so much shame and have depression, can you image? How can I hold my head?" (Male focus group, northern Gaza).



When asked about the pressures of unemployment, lack of opportunities and the pressure of raising a family one unemployed male focus group discussant declared,

"We are not completely human. We cannot provide the basic needs for our family, we are not a complete human anymore" (Male focus group, Khan Yunis).

The economic desperation strikes to the core of their identity as men, as providers and breadwinners, as guardians and protectors of family, leaving many men feeling helpless.

"They [men] have nothing to do, no jobs, no work, just waiting. The best solution is for them to go to the fence and die" (Female focus group, Rafah).

The above statement refers to the financial support that families of martyrs receive. She is suggesting that her husband is no longer contributing to their family and the 'waiting' she refers to speaks to the helplessness which has led many men to 'sit and wait', 'do nothing', be depressed. She is suggesting that instead of 'waiting', he would bring more to the family by dying. When viewed through this lens, the value and pressure men are faced with becomes more apparent. Men's feelings of frustration, pressure and helplessness, the 'broken masculinity' is further exacerbated by male cultural norms such as being tough, being independent and not requiring help, as well as being the protector rather than the one needing to be protected etc., which make seeking help for these feelings difficult. One male respondent from Khan Yunis explains,

"We only talk to each other about the frustration because it is forbidden to talk to an organization about personal stuff" (Male focus Group, Khan Yunis).

This isolation and stigma results in many men living with mental health challenges without diagnosis, or support.

"We see men with so much frustration, mental and emotional stress. We see it in the streets. Sometimes men are doing crazy things like throwing their phones for no reason, they are bursting. Their heads and hearts are breaking, it is breaking their minds" (Male focus group, northern Gaza).

An interesting and somewhat unexpected consequence of this 'broken masculinity' was highlighted in the IMAGES MENA Palestine study. According to the study, rather than



relaxing their patriarchal attitudes and moving towards more gender equitable attitudes (a trend that is observed in all other regions in the world), young Palestinian men are becoming more patriarchal and less equitable in their attitudes and beliefs than older generations. Men express these patriarchal attitudes through their attitudes towards gender roles and decision-making in the home related to household spending as well as their attitudes around domestic violence. One way of making sense of this finding is that young Palestinian men, particularly in Gaza, are unable to find work, afford marriage and achieve the status of financial provider; all traditionally important rites of passage for men. This may be producing a backlash against ideas of gender equality. In other words, male chauvinism is fueled by a sense of weakness, not strength.

2) HOW MASCULINE GENDER IDENTITY RELATES TO GENDER EQUALITY

The second aim of this research project was to examine how masculine gender identity in Gaza relates to, and shapes, gender equality in the region. Because gender equality is, at the core, about power dynamics in social, economic, cultural, and political relations, work in these areas must relate to increasing women's capacity to make autonomous decisions that transform unfavorable power dynamics that privilege men. In order to do this, working with men and masculinities is crucial. As such, increasing the number of women in the work force for example, may enhance women's status but does not directly empower them if the power relations in their everyday lives disempower them and prevent their autonomy and decision making. Therefore, any conversation about gender equality must talk about power dynamics. Identifying and understanding gendered power dynamics however, can be tricky. We constantly have to keep the whole picture in mind, dig beneath the surface, and look outside of the scope of a given intervention.

As we go into the findings related to this line of enquiry, it is necessary to understand that work on gender equality is not necessarily a linear progression. It requires multiple steps; illuminating structures of power, questioning the existing structures and relations, rejecting the authority of current gendered power structures, women having the space and opportunity to define and designing their own image of equality, and mobilizing potential sources of support, often all before systemic and sustainable change can be seen.

WOMEN AND WORK; WHY DO IT?

Participants varied in their views around why women engage in formal paid work; whether women should continue to engage in formal paid work if their husbands are employed; and why husbands support their wives to engage in formal paid work. The majority of focus group participants expressed the view that women working outside of the home in formal paid work was largely acceptable because of the dire economic situation in Gaza. Female beneficiaries explained that their husband's willingness to support their participation in an IGA, and/or livelihood program was largely predicated on the fact that their husbands were formally unemployed and unable to fulfil their social role as breadwinner and therefore opened up this role to women. Rather than husbands' decisions to let their wives work



being based on notions of equality or dignity, these decisions are based on necessity and economic desperation and still reflect the guardianship role men play in the family.

"If my husband worked, he would prevent me from working but he doesn't have a job so he has to let me work. When he does get a job, he won't let me work again"
(Resmee, focus group, Rafah).

These findings complicate the assumption that economic empowerment equals, or leads to, greater gender equality and points to the need to work with men to breakdown notions of guardianship, ownership, and their monopoly over decision making as well as working to dissolve strict roles related to gendered division of labor.

The above point is a clear result of the societal gender distribution of family roles: breadwinning = male domain and unpaid care work = female domain. These two roles are seen as completely separate and dependent on strict gender roles. The underlying assumption is that no matter what, men are responsible for breadwinning. If, and only if, they are unable to fulfil this role, they "let" women access this domain. The important thing to see here is that both men and women understand this to be temporary access. That is, until men are able to return to their 'natural' role as breadwinner. This will be addressed in greater detail below.

When female beneficiaries were asked whether they would like to continue with their IGA or livelihood project if their husbands were employed, the majority of female beneficiaries in Rafah said they would rather not engage in formal paid work. One exception was a woman who ran a chair rental business,

"I prefer to work. It proves my worth, and I gain self-respect. Not respect from other people but I feel proud about myself. My husband treats me the same before and after the project; with or without a job. That hasn't changed" (Islam, focus group, Rafah).

The above quote mirrored other participants who felt that, for the most part, their husbands did not treat them differently after they became breadwinners. This is important to note, as it is often assumed that by being employed or having an income, women also gain status, freedom and respect in the home. It is also further assumed that this ultimately leads to their overall empowerment. However, findings from focus groups did not support this hypothesis.

Most female focus group respondents framed women working as 'helping their husbands', rather than helping themselves, or their family's economic situation. This reflects the belief that employment is still largely a male domain.



“When women work, it creates more love between her and her husband because she is helping him” (Female focus group, Northern Gaza)

Findings from IMAGES MENA Palestine study also supported this finding; they found that 83% of men and 70% of women believed that when work opportunities are scarce, men should have preferential access to jobs before women (p. 33). Although this is not surprising, the impact of this is noteworthy. As long as formal employment is understood as a male domain, women will always be ‘visiting’, their engagement in more formal income generating activities will be framed as temporary and thus, the possible benefit to greater equality will likely be negated. This points to a potential target area for awareness raising interventions; highlighting that the economics of the house is as a joint endeavor. It is not the responsibility of men alone. This will have the double benefit of legitimizing women’s inclusion in the formal work force, as well as alleviating the pressure and sole responsibility of breadwinning on men. It is important to note however, that this messaging must go hand-in-hand with similar messaging around the fact that the burden of unpaid care is for the good of the family and therefore needs to be part of a team effort.

MEN ‘SUPPORT THEM TO WORK’

When female beneficiaries were asked whether their husbands supported their projects, for the most part, they said yes. However, when they were asked how exactly their husbands supported their projects, how they showed their support, they described their husbands as “encouraging”, “letting”, “allowing”, “permitting” them to participate in the projects. What is interesting however, is when asked to expand further on their husbands ‘letting’, ‘supporting’, or ‘allowing’ them to work with their projects, a common narrative emerged. This is most evident through a deeper look at the case of Income Generating Activities (IGAs) and/or livelihood projects that target women and female-headed households. When looking at male reaction to these interventions, for the sake of illustration and on the most simplistic of terms, we can generalize two divergent male reactions: 1) outright forbidding his wife from participation, and 2) allowing or encourages her to participate. At first glance, when we look at various IGAs and livelihood interventions, it appears that, despite a traditional identity as breadwinner, men have been able to put this aside and support or encourage their wives to participate and, in some cases, become the breadwinners. Both female and male research participants noted that husbands help wives fill out the application form for Action Against Hunger’s female-headed household livelihoods program, they do not block them from running their own business (for the most part) or from participating in training, and they appear to be proud of their wife’s accomplishments through the program. Compared to the many overt barriers some women face (such as not being allowed to work at all, not being able to leave the house to attend trainings etc), the above example of men encouraging their wives to participate appears to be not only the lesser of two evils, but also hopeful and



indicative of more gender equitable male attitudes. However, it is possible that these two examples, which seem on the surface to be opposite reactions, may in fact be shaped by and suffer from the same underlying patriarchal assumptions and power dynamics related to women's roles and duties.

Conceivably, the man who will not let his wife work and not support her to participate in a livelihoods or IGA program (note that these men were not part of our study as our sampling technique meant that we were only working with men whose wives were beneficiaries of livelihood programs or IGAs), is doing so because of some deeply held belief around gender roles- in the most simplistic terms, women's role is in the home as housewife and men's role is breadwinner. On the other hand, men who support their wives have not confined their wife's role to the burden of unpaid care. However, our research found (along with numerous other studies related to women's economic empowerment) that the number one complaint of women is that, in addition to the new work associated with participating in IGAs or livelihood projects, they were faced with the overwhelming burden of also being responsible for the vast majority of the family's unpaid care work.

Women from both focus groups said that as long as they were still able to do all of the unpaid care work, their husbands supported them to participate in a IGAs or livelihood project.

"Even to come here today I had to wake up at 5am to prepare breakfast for my family. If I do this, my husband doesn't care if I come" (Woman focus group, Northern Gaza).

This was further substantiated by men and women who stated a preference for IGAs inside the home, as opposed to outside. Both genders reported a preference for these homebased projects because it was easier for women to also fulfill daily household chores and jobs. Despite more women working outside of the home and being encouraged to participate in NGO programs emphasising female employment and IGAs, the social conviction that women's primary role is to take care of her house and her family still prevails. Respondents stressed that women's involvement in NGOs and livelihood projects should not compromise their ability to fulfill their house work.

"If the project is inside the house, this is good because I don't want my wife to get exhausted from the sun and from the travel...it [work outside of the home] is not good because it is a lot of pressure for her. It is a lot of pressure because she has to come home and do more work at the home" (Male Focus Group, Khan Yunis).

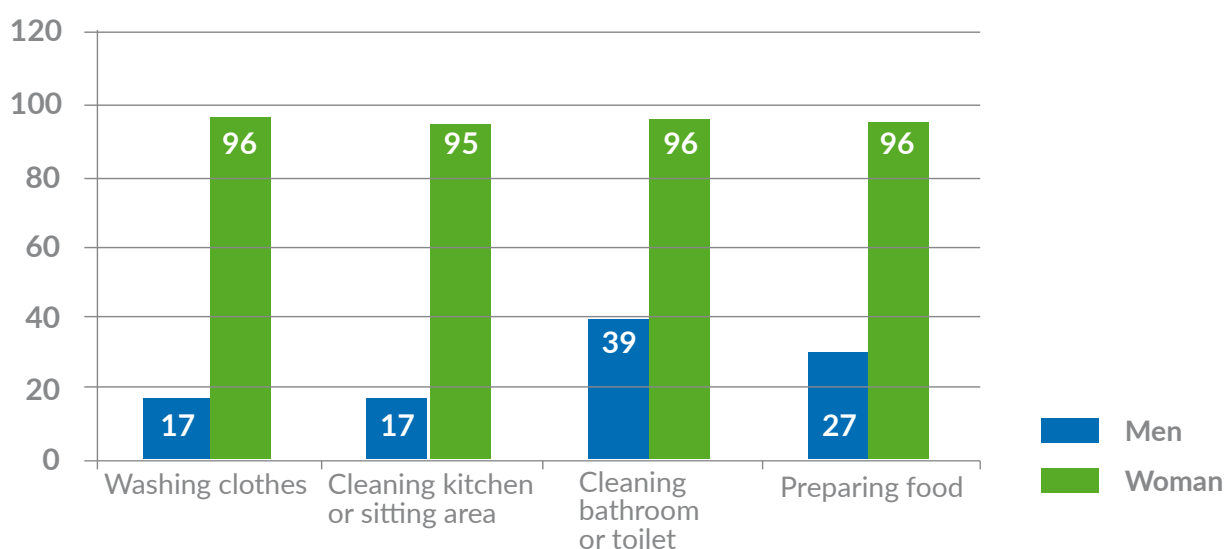


Similarity, another male respondent from Khan Yunis explained,

“It is too much for my wife to be working on her project until 3pm because she has other things to do at home like cooking and cleaning and praying.”

These men’s inflexible perceptions related to women’s inalienable responsibilities for household duties are important to keep in mind for programming because clearly, in addition to their traditional house work, we do not want further burden women by having to take on the additional responsibility of breadwinning. Ideally, in a situation where the wife is working and the husband is not, the husband will take on more of the house work. Conversely, in a situation where both are working, unpaid care work will be seen as a joint endeavor.

IMAGES MENA PALESTINE- DIVISION OF HOUSEHOLD LABOR



The IMAGES MENA Palestine study found that around 80% of men and 60% of women agreed that a woman’s most important role is to take care of the home. Similarly, 77% of men and 68% of women agreed that “changing diapers, giving baths to children, and feeding children should all be the mother’s responsibility” (p. 29). Therefore, opening the traditionally male domains of breadwinner to women, do not result in also opening up discussions and renegotiations around distribution of labor and traditional gendered spheres of work. It also did not contribute to raising awareness around the value and time-consuming nature of unpaid care work. Therefore, rather than transforming and challenging gender norms and gender division of labor, these women were not necessarily ‘empowered’ to challenge or break stereotypical gender roles, rather they were expected to take on women’s and men’s roles, therefore leaving gender hierarchies intact.



WHAT ABOUT UNPAID CARE WORK?

Ultimately, these findings point to the need to raise awareness around the amount of work that women do in the home in tandem with encouraging and facilitating their income generating work. Ways of doing this could range from awareness campaigns or workshops with husbands around the burden of unpaid care which highlight the amount of time and energy that goes into cooking, cleaning and caring for the children. Making men aware of the burden of this work is the first step in reversing the silencing and invisibility of it.

Theory Break

The privileging of masculinity, as seen in patriarchy, does not mean that all men are privileged, but rather that patriarchy devalues all feminized statuses, regardless who they are exhibited by. Therefore, men participating in traditionally female tasks such as unpaid care work, are de-valued, shamed and treated as less (Peterson, 2010). Patriarchy's undervaluing of women and their roles therefore, does not only create a power hierarchy between men and women, but also between men and other men.

As important, is messaging that frames unpaid care as an integral aspect of the survival of a house and not framed as 'women's work'; that it is difficult, time consuming and equally as important as work outside of the home. It must be valued equally to work outside the home. Delivering this message will help to frame unpaid care work as a valuable contribution to the family. Research suggests that in most societies ideas about masculinities are defined in opposition to ideas about femininity. This creates a pattern where characteristics typically associated with men and masculinities are admired and aspired to, while characteristics typically associated with women (such as nurturing, emotional, communicative) are feminized and thus denigrated, especially when exhibited by a man. Being aware of this is crucial in designing interventions. Once this is understood, introducing the idea of men contributing to this work is suddenly taken out of its traditional valueless and feminized domain, and frames it as a valuable, and essential. Highlighting the essential role of this work will make it easier for men to engage in this work with dignity; feeling that they are, despite being unemployed, still contributing and providing for their family, just not through providing an income.

SHAME

After raising men's awareness around the burden of unpaid care work, the next step is to work with both men and women to reverse the shame around men doing unpaid care work. Many male respondents described a sense of shame and/or embarrassment around doing unpaid care work, or more importantly, around being seen doing unpaid care work. This was also supported by female respondents. When a focus group of 10 women from Rafah were asked what they would think if they saw their husbands cleaning or cooking, they all burst out in laughter; it took another few minutes to communicate that it was a serious question. Maryam then shared,



“Some men think that if their wives see them helping, they will be seen as weak because they would be acting like a woman. But women would not feel like this! We would be on cloud 9 [in a state of bliss]!” (Female focus group, Rafah).

It was common for women to say that ‘others’ would object, be shameful about men doing unpaid care work, but rarely did people admit that they themselves were. Another example was Islam, she recounted how her husband was exposed to outside criticism for helping her in the house. She said that the neighbors criticized him for helping her, and then criticized her for letting him help her because the unpaid care work was her responsibility. Basil, a member of Aisha’s Ambassadors programme, detailed the challenge of translating what he learnt in the Ambassadors Program into his ‘real life’ in the following way,

“After the trainings, at first I was shy. I wanted to help my wife but I had to hide it from her, I was washing the dishes when she was in another room. I thought she would laugh at me. But now, it is common in my house. We are organizing tasks day by day, we ask, ‘who cooks today?’” (Basil, Aisha Ambassador Program Interview).

Sabah, from Al Mostaqbal Association spoke about raising her son to help his wife. She exclaims,

“I get happy when I see my married son help his wife. What do I need more than this? I want them to be happy. This is what I want. I don’t spread speech like he is not a man because he does the housework or something. Women here may have problems with their married sons if they found them help their wives. They consider it as shame and question his self-confidence” (Al Mostaqbal Association Interview).

This quote connects the phenomena of shame with the primary identity marker of ‘independent’ mentioned earlier. Sabah appears to be saying that women who do not support their husbands/sons/brothers in contributing to unpaid care work do so because it shows them to be weak, unsure of himself. This makes sense given that when women were asked about the qualities of an ideal man, they responded with sentiments such as, the ideal man “has his own opinions and is not influenced by others”. When asked the same question, men responded similarly saying, “he must have his own philosophy in life, in speech, in thought, he must be independent”.



The image of an 'independent decision maker' mentioned above, has as a profound impact on gender relations and gender equality in Gaza. Male participants often reported having more progressive ideas related to gender roles than their peers or than "other men". As such, there appears to be a dissonance between men's willingness to take on more unpaid care work such as cleaning and cooking, and their perception of other people's willingness to accept these new roles. For example, it was repetitively mentioned that men themselves didn't mind contributing to the work around the house if their wives were working outside of the house. However, they were willing to do this only as long as no one could see them. A focus group discussant explained,

"It's ok to help my wife if she really needs it, but she must not tell anyone because if someone sees me, or hears about it, they will gossip about me being controlled by my wife" (Male focus group, Khan Yunis).

Another man from the Gender Ambassadors program, recounted how he used to hide from his wife when he first started doing the dishes because he felt ashamed. He said he didn't want people to see him because they would all laugh and say he was, "taking on the perspective of his wife too much" (Basil). In other words, he was weak, not manly, and not independent.

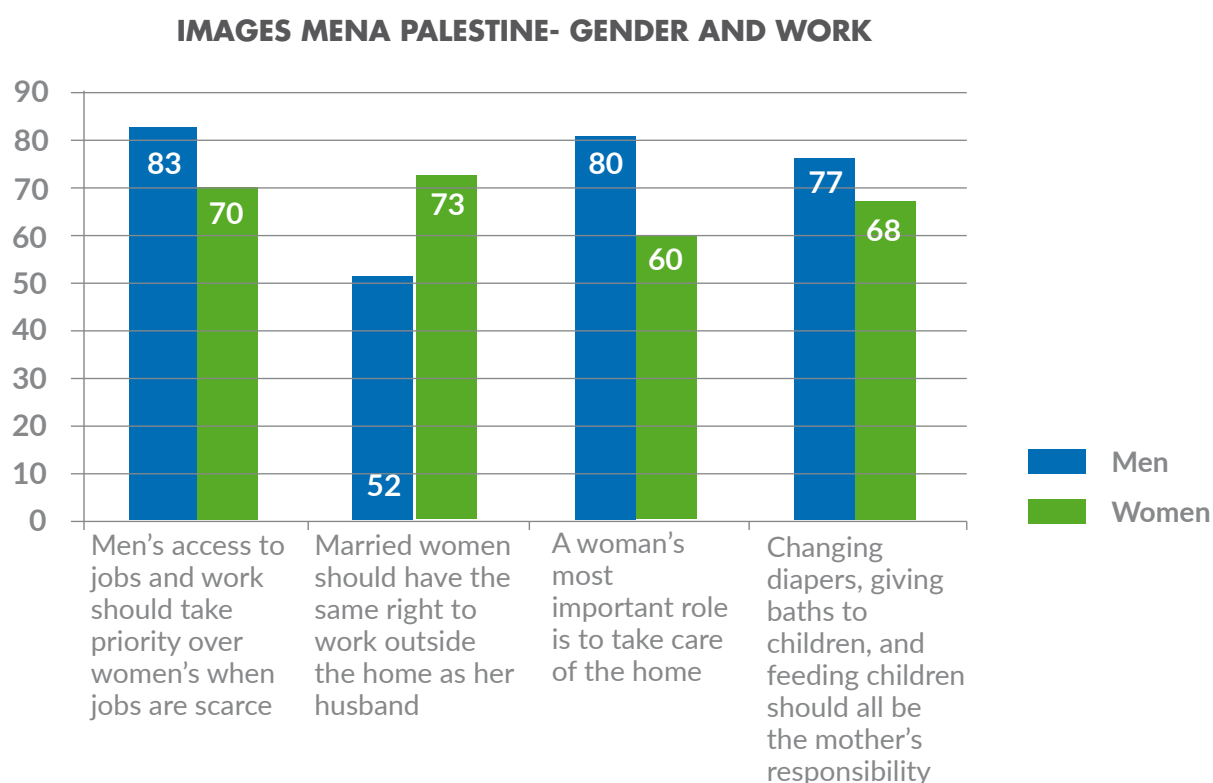
This points to an important entry point- engage men in trainings, workshops, awareness campaigns etc. in order for them to take ownership of the messaging they are receiving, so that they can bring the messaging into the community as theirs. This can help them to take ownership over their behavior and not fear being seen as changing their behavior because they are told to by their wives. In order to encourage more equitable distribution of unpaid care work, men obviously must be able to engage in this work without shame (internal and external); in order for this to happen, men have to be perceived as engaging in this work out of their own desire so to still appear as independent. In order for this to happen, their needs to be education and advocacy efforts directed to women as well as men.

The shame associated with men doing unpaid care work differed from the north to the south of Gaza. Respondents in the north of Gaza report less concern around 'shame' regarding men doing unpaid care work. Although this did appear in focus groups in the north, it was much less prevalent than in the south. This finding is hopeful because it suggests diversity and evidence of more progressive practices.

Another angle that needs to be addressed around the perceptions of masculinity and unpaid care work is illustrated by the IMAGES MENA Palestine study which found that 59% of women agreed that a woman's most important role is to take care of the home. This leads to the final point in this section; patriarchal attitudes that limit gender equality and reinforce inequality are not simply women's problems or men's problems. Both genders



hold beliefs about roles and responsibilities that are detrimental to gender equality. For example, only slightly more men than women, 77% of men and 68% of women in Gaza, agreed that “changing diapers, giving baths to children, and feeding children should all be the mother’s responsibility” (p. 29).



Moreover, the study found that of the nearly 2,000 respondents, in the month previous to the survey, 96% of women had washed the family's cloths compared to 17% of men; 95% of women had cleaned the kitchen or sitting room compared to 17% of men; 96% of women had cleaned the bathroom compared to 39% of men; and lastly, 96% of women had prepared the family's food, compared to 27% of men (p. 54). Although this data was not broken down in such a way that it is possible to compare female-headed and male-headed households, nevertheless, this data confirms how the majority of household work is distributed. To this end, 89% of men and 96% of women said that, within their homes, the wife does most of the household work (p. 56).

As the above data demonstrates, as well as our research findings, it is not only men who hold unequitable beliefs on gender equality. Women's roles as mothers, wives, sisters cannot be underestimated when trying to reframe and open up more avenues for men to express their masculinity. Therefore, there is great need to engage both women and men in efforts to promote more gender equitable masculine identities.



DECISION MAKING AND FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE

The fact that female beneficiaries of IGA or livelihood projects do not report greater overall equality relates to two interrelated and overlapping issues: 1) household decision making and 2) financial independence.

Household decision making is often summarized in three crucial decision-making processes: 1) health care and reproductive health, 2) financial expenditures, and 3) freedom of movement (visiting family members and friends). Although this study did not deal with the issues of healthcare, including reproductive health, respondents clearly articulated very low rates of female decision-making power in the areas of financial expenditures and freedom of movement. Indicative of this finding, IMAGES MENA Palestine study found that 80% of men reported that they should have final word around decisions in the home, compared to 48% of women (p. 30).

“Without fundamentally restructuring relations of power, the mere amelioration of conditions only reshapes the milieu of existing power relations, allowing these to persist in other guises” (Women’s Empowerment in Muslim Contexts, 2008, p. 17).

Every female participant (with the exception of one widow and one divorcee) reported having to ask permission to leave the house. These women, all livelihood/IGA beneficiaries, explained that despite the fact that they all worked, and most of them were the breadwinners in the family, they did not have autonomy over their own movement. Moreover, IMAGES MENA Palestine study found that 88% of men reported needing to know where their wife is at all times and 85% of husbands said that they control when their wives can leave the house (p. 60). A woman from Rafah highlighted the nuance of decision making in her home in the following way,

“For things related to the grocery store [her project] I make the decisions. But things related to going to visit my sister, going outside, I have to ask my husband” (Female focus group, Rafah).

Women’s decision-making power in Gaza is interpreted in relation to an established form of hegemonic masculinity rooted in men’s authority over women and is based on, as discussed earlier, men’s perceived role of protector. Women in our study internalize men’s role of protector and feel their security is dependent on their husband fulfilling this role. They therefore understand men’s authority over the family as an integral aspect of this protection. In a sense, this can be understood as women’s decision-making power is being traded for men’s protection.



I think that a man should be the authority in any project [IGA or livelihood project] this is better, he protects me this way. If they don't [have authority], maybe when I am walking in the street, men will harass me and say bad things to me (Female focus group, northern Gaza).

Directly connected to women's lack of decision making power, is women's financial independence. Findings suggest that in this area too, perceptions of both women and men related to women's financial independence are crystalized in patriarchal mindsets. Interestingly, women are often not only complicit in this mindset-- meaning that they too believed it was better for their husbands to control the family's finances regardless if they are the ones working-- but they argued this was due to that fact that they did not think that they themselves, or women in general, were capable of being responsible for these matters.

"I would like a joint project, my husband and I, this is better because I can take care of the labour of the project and he can take care of the management and finances" (Female focus group, northern Gaza).

While of course there are naturally some people who are better with numbers and managerial skills than others, what was apparent throughout the data collection appears to be related more to gender roles rather than to predispositions and/or inherent skills or qualities. These beliefs were highlighted through a stark difference between the perspectives of beneficiaries and the perspectives of NGOs, cooperatives and local associations vis-à-vis gender relations and financial decision making. Although some women expressed a preference for being able to retain a portion of their earnings for personal spending, the majority of beneficiaries, both of Action Against Hunger and other NGOs operating in the north of Gaza, expressed a preference for their husbands to manage their household financial matters. Unsurprisingly, this was also supported by male respondents.

When interviewing NGOs, cooperatives and local associations working in Gaza, there was a consensus that the goals of much of their work revolved around increasing women's decision making power and financial independence. These interventions were predicated on the assumption that decision making power and financial independence were not only vital for gender equality, but were also co-constitutive; meaning, decision making power is not possible without financial independence and financial independence is not possible without decision making power. If this is true, and decision making power and financial independence are vital for gender equality, the question becomes how we work towards gender equality when neither decision making power in the Gazan family





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system nor financial independence appear to alter all that much as a result of women participating in IGA or Livelihood projects. The answer lays in the need to pair these programs with trainings for women that address confidence and skills building around financial management, as well as working with men to raise awareness around women's rights and concepts of equality and cooperation, particularly around decision making and control over resources.

RELIGION AND CULTURE

***“There’s a lot of law writing, standards setting, programmes being planned, but the biggest problem...is that people are using culture and religion to deny women’s rights”
(Radhika Coomaraswamy, the former UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women)***

Islam strongly influences the social, economic and political spheres of life in Gaza. In order to know how best to work with, within, and outside of the religious framework of Gazan society, it is crucial to first explore, interrogate and make visible the varied ways in which Islam is used to legitimize and de-legitimize women's rights. The use of culture and religion to disempower women manifests itself in different forms at multiple interrelated levels: 1) macro political level; 2) meso level with patriarchal kinship-based groups and community level politico-religious groups, mukthars etc; and 3) micro level in interpersonal relations. An interviewee from the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR) explained that a common problem in Gaza is that people do not differentiate between what she called 'popular religion', which refers to local religious interpretation, and legally binding Sharia Law. She argued that the average Gazan's understanding of the relationship between religion, culture and law has undergone so many 'interpretations' that Gazans, both men and women, often do not know their rights under Sharia Law, let alone their legal obligations.

“I am certain that the barriers on the path towards a fairer future for women in Gaza are not grounded in religion (family law in the State of Palestine is based on the teachings of Islam), but rather in misinterpretation of Islamic traditions” (Ayah Al-Wakeel Interview PCHR lawyer).

This distinction was also made in focus groups where a minority of men in a focus group in northern Gaza pushed back on their peers who were citing Islam as the reason for women not having equal access to employment, decision making and financial independence. This minority of men explained that in the Qur'an, women have the right to work if they want. Much like the point mentioned by the PCHR, these men distinguished between religion and tradition, saying that they are not the same. It is tradition, they say, rather than religion, that forbids women from working.



Therefore, both women's and men's lives are governed not only socially, but also legally, by interpretations of religious texts. Legal professionals interviewed cite Islamic laws around divorce and inheritance to be of particular importance and concern in Gaza. Much like religion around the world, Islam strongly influences the social, economic and political spheres of life in Gaza. Political Islam forms the scaffolding around which Gazan society now rests and much of 'common religion', or religion that is practiced every day, is a result of local, regional and political interpretations. Therefore, working within such religious realities is necessary.

As with most of the world, topics related to the relationship between religion and culture are tremendously sensitive. In addition to sensitivities inherent in these two concepts in isolation, the connection between the two also evokes deeply felt reactions. Collectively, these function to shape the rules and norms within the Gaza Strip. These rules and norms include those governing the behavior of women and men. As one participant explained,

"We shouldn't do things freely, as we like. We should respect traditions and habits"
(Female focus group, Rafah).

As such, operating within a framework that is both sensitive to, but also able to challenge, these rules and norms is crucial. Respondents were quick to defend and reiterate their commitment to religion and culture when pressed on these topics. Statements such as, "Sharia gives women equal rights, I am proud to be a Muslim" were often stressed before the respondent would go on to share stories of domestic violence, being forbidden to finish school once married, being denied the right to divorce, etc.

Many feminist scholars like Fatima Mernissi, the well-known Moroccan professor of sociology, the Pakistani academic Asma Barlas and the Iranian Nobel Peace Prize winner Shirin Ebadi, as well as certain male religious scholars such as Dr. Khaled Abou El-Fadl strongly believe in the possibility of interpreting the Qur'an and Hadith in a gender-equitable manner. Engaging with scholars such as these can help to figure out culturally and religiously appropriate messaging for awareness and advocacy work around the topics of gender equality and can help to support the adoption of reform-oriented and gender-equitable interpretation of Islam.

For example, there is a Sunnah in Islam that can be interpreted as emphasizing the importance of husband and wife working together as a team. Aisha, the wife of Mohammad was asked,

"What did the Prophet do in his house?" Aisha replied:
"He used to keep himself busy serving his family and when it was the time for prayer he would go for it."



An important detail in the above-mentioned Hadith is that an Arabic word of “Mihnah” is used in the verse in Arabic. This literally translates to work or profession, implying that serving his family and looking after a home is considered as a profession equal to other professions. Aisha also stated:

“He did what one of you would do in his house. He mended sandals and patched garments and sewed.” (Adab Al-Mufrad graded sahih by Al-Albani).

These quotes could provide the basis for material and messaging targeting both men and women.

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

When asked about the biggest stress and challenge in their lives, all participants cited the economic situation, referring to it as either an ‘economic crisis’, or a ‘crisis in jobs’. Furthermore, both male and female respondents drew a direct connection between this crisis and GBV.

“If I’m poor and can’t afford food for my son do you think I will ever think about stopping violence to my family members? I won’t care about how I will treat him, but I will be caring about feeding him” (Male focus group, Ambassadors Program, Gaza City).

Although slightly out of date now, according to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistic (PCBS) 2011 Violence Survey, an average of 51% of women in the Gaza Strip are victims of GBV. GBV was most commonly mentioned in relation to the pressure men experience when they are not able to provide their wives with the necessary financial means to meet the household needs.

“My husband starts to be violent with me when he doesn’t have any money. He breaks things in the house when I ask him for something” (Female focus group, northern Gaza).

The link between the economic situation in Gaza and GBV was understood to stem from the humiliation and shame that men feel when they are unable to provide for their families. Men often project the feelings of shame they have about themselves on their wives; assuming that their wives do not respect them because they cannot provide for the family or meet their basic needs. Given the very limited social and cultural space to discuss these feelings of shame and humiliation, some men lash out in violence.



"If I am suffering from severe and bad economic conditions, I would know that they [women] especially my wife, look at me with inferiority. How would I be getting rid of that inferior look? By practicing violence!" (Ambassadors focus group, Gaza City).

The subsequent importance of providing a space where men can talk about the pressures they are under and their thoughts, feelings and emotions will be discussed in the following section.

It is important however that we do not reduce GBV to a consequence of the blockade and occupation alone. Although participants claimed that without the economic crisis, there would be no violence in their home, worldwide data suggests this is not the case. GBV occurs in all countries, at all levels of social stratification. Rather than a consequence of financial pressure, extensive research suggests it is related to the unequal power distribution between men and women. This means that solving the economic crisis alone will not solve the GBV problem. Which leads us to the crucial point that interventions in the sphere of gender equality— of which fighting GBV is an integral part— requires a multi-prong approach that tackles family dynamics, cultural norms and religious teachings that perpetuate an unequal distribution of power between men and women. This is not to say however, that there is not a connection between structural inequality and structural violence such as the occupation and blockade. Certainly, a wide body of postcolonial scholarship (Fanon, 1967; Chatterjee, 1989; McClintock, 1995; Sinha, 1995) has stressed a link between the subjugated status of colonized men and their sense of disempowerment in the public realm, with their control of women in the private and domestic sphere (Fanon, 1967; Chatterjee, 1989). This was visible throughout data collection,

"You can't separate all the economic, political, religious violence we, in our community, are going through. The Israeli occupation the blockade, we are being violated every day. Our daily life is humiliation. We are under poverty rates, we cannot go to Al Quds, we are bombed. All of these things indicate the violence we're going through. We become the violence, the violence becomes us" (Interview, Aisha Association for Woman and Child Protection).

A study conducted by UNIFEM (2009) found that in Gaza, male children experienced more violence in the home from fathers and at school from teachers than their female classmates and siblings (p. 22). Interestingly, when interviewed, these boys credited the violence they faced from their fathers and older siblings as an outcome of their general frustration at the blockade rather than a reaction to a negative behavior of the boys themselves. Many boys stated that they try to spend as much time outside the home as possible in order to avoid their fathers, who are in a constant state of frustration and



anger. The young boys in the UNIFEM study are themselves victims of violence in the home and at school. This must be acknowledged and taken seriously because recent research suggests that the single strongest factor, across countries, affecting men's use of violence against intimate partners was having witnessed or been recipients of violence during childhood. Therefore, helping boys and young men deal with the trauma of their own experiences of patriarchal violence is critical for their own well-being, as well as helping to interrupt the cycle of violence.

As the above example highlighted, gender stereotypes and socialization not only shapes women's experiences, but also men's. This process can have a dehumanizing effect on both genders. For example, the image of an injured or dying Palestinian young man, laying bleeding on the ground (having been shot by Israeli snipers for example) is an all too common image in the media and news in Gaza. Although there are grieving and angry voices, particularly when it is a child (such as 15-year-old Muhammad Ibrahim Ayyoub in Gaza on April 20th, 2018), there is less outrage than if the same footage and images emerge of young girl was lying injured or dying on the ground. This is because there is an ingrained acceptance that masculinity and violence go hand in hand. Men and boys dying is not seen as innocent as women and girls dying. Instead, it is accepted that they are 'fighters', 'shaheed'. Because they are men, people somehow believe that they are complicit in their fate, even if there is outrage at the Israelis. The tragedy of the thousands of young boys and men losing their lives is interpreted through expectations of gender roles and the outrage that should be felt over these lost lives, is diminished. It is instead reduced to fighting the blockade, not a deadly consequence of gender roles and expectations.

3) THE MODEL

This section will conclude with a model, or summary, of gender relations in Gaza based on data collected from the focus groups and interviews. It is hoped that this model will help to conceptualize and understand findings of this research. Although simplistic, this model hopes to summarize the state of masculinities and gender roles in the Gaza Strip and the subsequent impact and importance for gender equality work.

The blockade on Gaza, and subsequent livelihood/economic crisis, has made flexibility in the Gazan family system crucial for survival. This, combined with a rise in efforts by NGOs and the UN to promote gender equality, has led many women in Gaza to transcend their roles as housewives and engage in paid labor, or to engage in food security and livelihoods activities inside the home (such as home gardens). On the one hand, women's employment, inside or outside of the home, appears to be a positive indication of an increase in their power and value within the family, as well as in society writ large. On the other hand, flexibility within the family system solidifies power dynamics between men and women that are in fact inflexible and uncompromising. They become more rigid because families have to sustain the stresses of daily life, and establish defined and knowable communication, power, and decision-making conventions within the family to do so. A paradox emerges as a result of this: the Gazan





family becomes simultaneously a site of flexibility and cooperation, while at the same time, a site of oppression, violence, and rigid access to power. The reluctance of these dynamics to change can be best understood as being borne out of a fear of altering an effective survival technique, that is based on the necessity to endure the blockade and occupation. Moreover, men are far less likely to give up power if they are feeling like the little power they do have, is being threatened on a daily basis. As such, changes in mobility, economic empowerment etc. for women are understood to be temporary and part of a survival mechanism, rather than transformative and sustainable.

Therefore, despite perceived flexibility or progress in family and gender relations during times of crisis (such as women working outside of the home), in fact, the perpetual survival mode of Gazan families cements power relations that prevent any lasting transformation. As such, although some women have moved away from traditional unpaid work, to providing financially for their family, this is often framed by participants as women moving towards more traditionally masculine roles, in contrast, men's shift away from breadwinner and providing roles has not resulted in a corresponding move towards increased responsibilities in the home. As a result, men have not only lost a primary narrative or role of their identity (breadwinning), but they have also gained nothing in terms of new roles, identity markers or responsibilities. For some men, this results in a crisis in purpose, meaning and usefulness. What purpose does a husband serve now if not to provide for his family? While women have a heightening purpose, fulfilling both feminine and masculine roles, men have neither. This reorganizing of gender roles and identity— a necessary change in order to survive the geopolitical realities of life under Israeli occupation and blockade— has resulted in not only 'broken masculinity' but an overall crisis in gender relations.

The overall crisis in gender relations has also created a crisis in femininity. This can best be understood to result from three main factors: 1) women taking on the breadwinning role in the family (due in part to the economic crisis and the feminization of aid) and subsequently; 2) losing the social status and identity that comes with being part of a traditional family system; and 3) the humiliation of having to search out aid and 'charity' (again, directly due in the feminization of aid). On the other hand, one of the most cited consequences of the imposed occupation and blockade on males and masculinities in Gaza is what we are calling 'broken masculinity'. 'Broken masculinity' results primarily from: 1) a man's loss of ability to protect and provide for his family and/or; 2) having no socially acceptable, and thus dignified, avenues to compensate for this loss of role and contribution to the family. Together, the crisis in femininity and the crisis in masculinity results in a complex situation where neither men nor women are satisfied with the new gender roles that are produced from their circumstance.

Men need to have ways of attaining value in the family and home in order for them to truly let go of the antiquated image of financially providing for their family and their monopoly on decision making. Moreover, this is also required in order for women to let go of antiquated ideas of male breadwinning and to feel pride in their husbands and thus themselves again. Because historically women's unpaid care work has never been valued, respected or framed



as 'work', there is no positive status attached to doing it. Men are not opposed to working, so why are they opposed to doing house work and childcare work? The answer lies in the value placed on these forms of work. If this type of work was valued by men as much as formal waged work, then not only would there not be a negative stigma attached to engaging in such work, rather, comparable pride, and status would be achieved through it. One way to overcome this may be to design programs, projects and campaigns which highlight the valuable role that men can play as fathers and as husbands through cooking and cleaning. This requires two preliminary steps: 1) to illuminate how much work actually goes into keeping a house and raising a family and 2) framing this as not only a crucial and necessary role for the survival of Palestinian culture but also the community and the family. This would place a level of importance and urgency to the activities, roles and responsibilities associated with unpaid care work. If successfully communicated, men can regain the pride and utility they once gained from being the breadwinner, with childrearing and playing a crucial role in maintaining the house. The lynchpin to this being successful is taking into consideration the fundamental aspect of dignity. No progress will be made towards gender equality without men and women both feeling they have dignity. Given what we know about masculinities and femininities being relational, women's dignity in society cannot be achieved, maintained or sustained without the dignity of men because gendered identities are co-constituted. For women, a crucial aspect of dignity rests on being married to a useful, engaged man, one who fills a fundamental role in the family, and is not useless, lazy and sitting at home smoking and accepting unemployment. For men, they have to feel that they are valuable to their family, that they are responsible, that they are crucial to the survival of their family.

As this model, or summary, has tried to illustrate, if taking a nuanced approach to working on male gender roles and masculinities is not incorporated into gender equality work, the lasting effects of many efforts will ultimately be eclipsed by the devastating impact of Israel's occupation and blockade of Gaza which places families in crisis mode; a mode that allows for very little, if any, redistribution of power and decision making in the family. In such a case, rather than transforming unequitable gender norms, the apparent empowerment achieved through women's income generating and livelihood activities will be thwarted and their income generating activity outside the home will remain embedded in a long history of being a 'shock absorber' for crises in male breadwinner status.





5

SECTION 5

SECTION 5: KEY ENTRY POINTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following section lays out 5 key entry points: Teamwork, Male Role Models, Safe Space to Consult and Engage men, Female Beneficiaries to Change Masculinities, and Islamic Scholars. After exploring the justification and importance of each entry point, recommendations will be given regarding how to integrate findings into Action Against Hunger's programming.

Please note: This is not a generic template for action. Rather, this section hopes to provide a few starting points to spur conversations and thinking around ways of integrating a masculinities approach into Action Against Hunger's gender approach. While both men and women may currently be involved in Action Against Hunger's policy and programming, this report is arguing that simply including men in programs is not enough. A nuanced appreciation and engagement with masculinities is required in order to shift gender roles, norms and expectations in hopes of redistributing power between men and women in a more equitable manner.

A WORD OF CAUTION

Before diving into key entry points and recommendations, it is important to briefly mention that although this report has argued for the importance of widening our understanding of gender to include the study, analysis and engagement of men and masculinities in gender work, what we are calling a 'masculinities approach', this area remains a hotly debated topic and is not welcomed by all practitioners. Just as there are risks to not engaging men and boys in gender equality work, there are also risks with engaging them. Detractors argue that engaging men and masculinities shifts attention and the allocation of resources away from women and girls who need it most, back towards men; essentially undoing the decades of work that feminist have fought for in order to obtain the necessary attention and resources in development to women and girls. They argue that because of the dominant position of men in most societies, including Gaza, even men's positive engagement and involvement in gender equality work risks reinforcing the hegemony of men. For example, although encouraging and using male role models engagement in unpaid care work and child rearing as examples of positive masculinities is important, it is equally important that they are not overpraised for getting involved in caregiving roles and considered heroes. This engagement should focus on men's accountability rather than their leadership. It would be a disservice to the larger gender equality mandate to praise men for their more equitable attitudes, thus reinstating more power and value in their actions over those of women's actions in the same domain.

In order to avoid the potential danger of a 'masculinities approach' there are a few points that should be kept in mind: men's problems should not be seen as unrelated to women and girls problems because this may take the focus off the underlying problem of unequal power relations; men are not a homogenous group, they are not all violent, all against gender equality, all unable to provide for their families etc., forgetting this can lead to simplistic policies and



approaches that are unhelpful; however, all men have a role to play and a responsibility in redistributing power.

1) TEAMWORK

Working with only women, or only with men, can further exacerbate tensions between genders and fails to treat husbands and wives as a team, as a unit. Rather, it encourages individualistic and even competitiveness between the two. This not only isolates men, but it can also discredit these interventions in the eyes of female beneficiaries as well,

“These types of programs that target women, do so for cheap labor. They target women because women will work for cheap and men will not” (Female focus group, Rafah).

Marriage has the potential to increase the productivity, and reduce the burden of daily life on individuals based on the benefits of having two sets of hands, working towards a common goal. This however, is often not what plays out, especially in crisis/conflict settings. Husbands and wives reported high levels of tension, resentment and sabotage in their marriage. This ranged from husbands feeling immense pressure and shame for being unable to provide for their family and wives feeling like the ‘punching bag’ of this frustration; men feeling like their wives are always pressuring them for money while women feel that they are being expected to work with NGOs and also incur all of the unpaid care work; to women feeling controlled and unable to leave the house without their husband’s consent and husbands feeling like they have no value, no hope and no dignity.

“There is a danger in targeting women because men do not like to see their wife succeed when he is not. Therefore, he might try and sabotage her work, or make her fail on purpose” (Maha, interview, Palestinian Rural Women’s Society for Development).

These grievances point to a lack of cohesion, solidarity and sense of being on the same team in many Gazan marriages.

An integral part of gender equality work is working with men and women to determine context specific ways for women to claim their basic human rights. In order to do this, we must come up with a way of framing masculinities and men that does not vilify them. By portraying men as implicit problematic barriers to gender equality, opportunities to engage them as change agents are lost. For too long men have been portrayed as being against women, against gender equality and against women’s empowerment. There is nothing anti-women about being a man. Rather it is a consequence of a combination of many things such as: social norms and gender roles; patriarchy; religion; culture; and the political, humanitarian and social crisis. Therefore, efforts need to be placed on countering this, on framing men and women as being on the same team and recognizing physical/sex differences versus gender.



Kerr et al. (2011) provide an interesting example of a project that incorporated both men and women in a livelihood and food security project in Malawi. Their study found that livelihood and food security interventions were most successful when they had an explicit and inclusive focus on both men and women and targeted hegemonic masculine perceptions around roles related to child care and unpaid care work.

“The problem with other approaches is that only women are called to learn about ‘jenda’, forgetting that it is an issue of men and women” (p. 11).

Their participants explained that engaging husbands and male village leaders was crucial in encouraging more gender equitable masculinities in the community. They contrasted this approach with other agricultural and nutrition intervention programs in Malawi which did not engage men and masculinities and found that their model was more successful at building greater gender equality through changing gender norms around men's engagement in unpaid care work and childcare (p. 11).

Framing a husband and wife as a team could be achieved through a focus on the following three points: 1) providing for the family is not solely a man's job; 2) unpaid care work is not solely a women's job; and 3) ending the blockade and building a better future requires the work of both men and women.

Male focus group participants often framed their wives as “always asking for things”. Elaborating on this, men listed things such as groceries, clothing for the children or money for medicine. It was often portrayed as if these were things the wife wanted, but the husband did not, as if it was a burden to provide them, rather than a necessity for the family. It was explained that this places extra pressure on men and then causes a lot of fighting. This framing is a result of two things: First, the fact that women working in IGAs or livelihood projects give their money to their husbands, and thus reinforce the male breadwinning role and make it inevitable that they are going to have to ask for the money to buy groceries. Therefore, in some cases, women “asking for things” may be a result of wives handing over their earnings in the first place. Had she kept her earnings, she may be better placed to manage the family's household spending, or at least be aware of the family's financial situation vis-à-vis household needs.

Secondly, the feeling of women “always asking for things” is a hang-over from cultural and patriarchal norms that situate men as decision makers in the family. Men want to be in custody of all decisions being made regarding the way family expenses are managed yet, when times are tough, being the gatekeeper is extremely frustrating and ensures a great deal of pressure. Moreover, men's priorities for household spending may differ from women's. For example, women may value more nutritious food which has a tendency to be more expensive or women may place more value on education for all children rather than only male children etc. When wives ask for money from their husbands, this adds ‘insult to injury’ because first of all, they



themselves did not earn the money, and then on top of that, there is never enough to go around; they are failing on both fronts. Therefore, there is a need to reframe household needs and roles to emphasize the fact that as a married couple, they should be on the same team. This refers to unpaid care work, breadwinning, decision making etc. In order to work towards this, unpaid care work has to be understood as valuable work that is vital for the survival of the family. Moreover, it needs to be valued equal to wage earning work. Moreover, if the marriage is treated more like teamwork, and men's shame around breadwinning is reduced, it could open up opportunities for discussions around differing household spending priorities between husbands and wives.

Framing women and men as part of the same team also fits within the larger human rights and social justice struggle in Gaza. Women's rights cannot be dealt with as a separate field from human rights. Connecting the two struggles: fighting inequality between Israel and Palestine and the blockade, and fighting for equality between men and women, is an important, yet currently underutilized tool.

“Considering women’s rights to be something outside of the context of human rights in general may convey the message that women’s rights initiatives come at the expense of men and their rights. Thus, placing women’s rights in the context of human rights – where they rightfully belong – places men and women on the same side instead of against one another” (ABAAD, p. 6).

Efforts to survive and end the blockade, as well as building a better future for Gaza, requires the work of both men and women. Because women are an integral part of what it means to be Palestinian, there can be no political and regional justice without gender equality. In order to overcome the efforts of cultural genocide, discrimination, fear, misunderstanding towards the Arab world, propaganda, and the erasing of Palestine from the map, Palestinian society must evolve and come into a new era. An era in which men and women are both equal and free within their own society and unite towards resisting and fighting the blockade and occupation. Lastly, it is known that external crises can create the conditions for change. A major political or social crisis, war, natural disaster, or other event can galvanize people and catalyze change. Therefore, highlighting the interdependence of women and men for a brighter future should be made clear. Perhaps a campaign based on the Nicaraguan example would be impactful. Nicaragua faced an external crisis in the wake of Hurricane Mitch in 1998. Seizing this opportunity, the NGO Puntos de Encuentro used this external crisis to spark national conversations on gender equality and domestic violence. They developed a campaign whose slogan was, “Violence against women is a disaster that men can prevent.” In the Gazan context, perhaps something along the lines of “The blockade can’t separate us from gender equality!”, “Violence against women is a catastrophe that men can prevent” [run around Nakba day], or “The blockade won’t block gender equality!”



RECOMMENDATIONS

The notion of teamwork should be the underlying theme or framework for all interventions aiming to engage men and incorporate a masculinities approach into gender equality work. Framing marriage, or the family, as a team is a crucial step towards eliminating the competition, jealousy, and resentment sometimes seen between husband and wife.

- As part of the application process, questions could be added regarding what, according to the potential beneficiary, the anticipated roles will be of their husband or wife (depending on who the target beneficiary is) in supporting the project. These questions could ask something along the lines, “What do you anticipate the role of your (husband or wife) being in supporting your project/participation?” Asking this question alone will get the beneficiary thinking about the project as something requiring the support of both partners. Moreover, after collecting this information, it can be used to identify the baseline perceptions of beneficiaries, something that can be used later in the project, or at the end of the project cycle, to revisit and measure change in perceptions.
- Moreover, the partners of beneficiaries could be asked to attend a workshop, training or communication activity as part of the requirements/criteria. During the workshop/training, Action Against Hunger staff could present material and exercises focusing on the following three points, this material will form the foundation of a ‘masculinities training package’ (See Annex):

1) Providing for the family is not solely a man’s job. The fact that 83% of men and 70% of women believed that when work opportunities are scarce, men should have preferential access to jobs before women (IMAGES, 2017, p. 33), reflects the belief that employment is still largely a male domain. Although this is not surprising, the impact of this is noteworthy. As long as employment is understood as a male domain, women will always be ‘visiting’, their engagement in more formal income generating activities will be framed as temporary and thus, the possible benefit to their overall empowerment will likely be negated. This points to a potential target area for awareness raising interventions; highlighting that the economics of the house is as a joint endeavor. It is not the responsibility of men alone. This will have the double benefit of legitimizing women’s inclusion in the work force, as well as alleviating the pressure and sole responsibility of breadwinning on men. It is important to note however, that this messaging must go hand-in-hand with similar messaging around the fact that unpaid care work is not solely a women’s job, rather it is a family good and must be part of a team effort.

2) Unpaid care work is not solely a women’s job. In order to do this, two things need to occur. First, there needs to be awareness raising efforts focusing on the burden of unpaid care work and how time consuming it is. Secondly, the emphasis of messaging needs to be placed on the importance and value of this work highlighting the fact that it is integral to the survival of the family. Participants should leave the workshop/training with (at least in theory) unpaid care work being valued equal to wage labor outside of the home.



This will help encourage men to engage in this work with dignity; feeling that they are, contributing and providing for their family.

Building a better future requires the teamwork of both men and women. It is known that external crises can help create the conditions for change by galvanizing people to catalyze change. One way of capitalizing on the economic crisis and integrating messaging around teamwork could be to highlight the interdependence of women and men for building a brighter future.

2) ROLE MODELS

Men who speak about women's rights and exhibit 'alternative masculinities' can have a profound effect on other men. Working with these men as role models in their family, community and country has the power to shift mindsets and begin the long process of norm changing. The logic is simple; men imitate the behavior of other men, particularly men they look up to. This is not a Gazan thing, but a human thing. Basil, a member of the Ambassadors Program explained,

"At first people used to gossip about me when I was helping my wife, but I would just smile at them. They always saw me smiling and thought that I must be happy in my marriage and in my home. This made them want to imitate me" (Basil, interview).

The question is not 'if' men exhibit masculinity, but rather 'which' masculine discourses they engage in. This choice is based on what is available to them and is highly context specific. We must remember that much of the inequality we aim to overcome in gender equality work is challenging precisely because it is the norm, it is everywhere, and it is perpetuated by most people in a society. Therefore, people may actually not know, understand, or be able to image what an alternative would or could look like. This is where role models hold their power.

"One day I saw my brother helping his wife do everything in the house, I was really amazed. I have never seen this before. I was astonished. I wanted to imitate him, it made me want to learn, and it made me not think it was embarrassing" (Male focus group, northern Gaza).

In every society, there are examples of people breaking from the norm, taking a stand, speaking out and pushing for change. Behind every one of these men however, are hundreds more who, if given the right encouragement, could also be agents of change. The key is offering alternative role models. These alternative role models can be both formal or informal. The point being, men and boys need someone to light the path, they need a place or social space where they might question their beliefs and attitudes in the company of men who adhere to alternative masculinities. Highlighting the diversity of masculinities is an important asset in development work because

"as diversity becomes better known, men and boys can more easily see a range of possibilities for their own lives" (Connell, 2005, p. 1817).



The findings of IMAGES MENA Palestine study confirm, “like father, like son” meaning that men whose fathers participated in commonly feminine household work, as well as men who were taught to do this work as children, are far more likely to contribute in these ways within their own marriages. Supporting men to develop alternative masculinities that reject inequitable attitudes and view their role within the house as one that is equal to and compliments women’s, rather than dominates, is crucial for the success of gender equality work. Positive male role models can help to first demonstrate what alternatives could look like, encourage men’s alternative masculinities in the community, as well as help to create solidarity between men, reminding individuals that they are not alone in challenging unequal social norms around unpaid care work, violence or controlling behavior. This is supported by literature from around the world which stresses that opportunities for like-minded men to build alliances, advocate and share lessons related to gender equality is crucial for a wider acceptance and societal uptake of these beliefs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Male Action Against Hunger staff should be trained as positive male role models. This would require them to exhibit gender equitable behavior during the trainings, be highly educated and aware of the various issues related to power in Gazan families, and armed with anecdotes around the benefits of gender equality. They should not be afraid or embarrassed to talk about sharing responsibility for unpaid care work within their home, and should be coached in how to deal with ridicule in order to have the confidence to stay steadfast to these principles in front of a group of men.
- Male Action Against Hunger staff should be well versed in the ‘masculinities training package’ and be comfortable presenting the material and facilitating the necessary conversations.



3) SAFE SPACE TO CONSULT AND ENGAGE MEN

Men and women both need safe spaces to learn about gender equality, ask questions and to not feel judged for their ignorance around gender equality. Men also however, need safe spaces and opportunities to talk about issues facing them in their daily lives, their feelings and emotions, their concerns and fears. Throughout data collection, it was often mentioned that men have nowhere to turn to for support, for help, nowhere to talk. Twice after holding a focus group with men, one in Khan Yunis and the other in northern Gaza, men individually came up to the research team to thanked them for taking the time to listen to them and to ask them what they think, feel, how they are coping and reacting to the various crisis in Gaza. They all reflected on the fact that people have never asked them this before. Part of this can be seen as a result of the feminization of aid. We assume that we already understand the male perspective and we need to empower, or help, women. Although women absolutely do need to be given opportunities to speak and to be heard, this does not preclude men from also having the opportunity to do so as well. However, care needs to be taken as to ensure that men's voices do not overpower those of women. Building off of the benefits for creating a safe space for men to engage and be consulted, is the added advantage of countering local frustrations and narratives around aid and development which targets women. A common feature in focus groups, was a feeling of frustration around the fact that many NGOs and UNRWA specifically target women in their programs, a phenomenon commonly known as the feminization of aid. Both men and women reported being dissatisfied with this.

"I used to be on top in my family but now, I am not because women are working, they have careers. NGOs are responsible for men not being on top anymore because they are giving all of the work to women. UNRWA for example only works with women!" (Male focus group, northern Gaza).

There is a great deal of diversity in men's experiences and just because patriarchy prevails and results in the subjugation of women, this does not mean that men's experiences, thoughts and emotions should be excluded in our analysis and programming. Male participants spoke about having neither social opportunities to talk about their feelings (because their social networks had been destroyed by the crisis in Gaza), nor opportunities to talk to healthcare professionals about their feelings. This is largely due to the fact that men are trapped inside the narrative of independent decision-maker, protector and provider; they are not encouraged to be anything else outside of these roles. This leaves very little room for men to cope with the feelings that come up when a they are unable to fulfil these roles.

"All men are broken in Gaza now. They don't work, they don't even try anymore. They don't have emotions" (Female focus group, Rafah)



As previously mentioned, the resulting 'broken masculinity' leads not only to feeling of failure, incompetence and humiliation, but also isolation. Members of the Ambassadors Program explained that one of the biggest challenges they faced throughout the three years they have been participating in the program, was during the first year of training. The biggest challenge they cited was learning how to talk about their emotions, their feelings and to trust one another to do this in the group.

"The hardest part is to get men to start talking about their feelings. For women, it is easy, they can cry anywhere. For men, this is very difficult. We only have anger, no other emotions. It is very difficult to break open the black box inside of men. In order to do this, and to get men to speak about their feelings, there needs to be a safe space for them to speak freely" (Basil, Ambassadors Program interview, Gaza City).

Another member of the Ambassadors Program explained,

"It was hard for us to express our feelings, and demonstrate how we feel. All the trainings for expressing your feelings were very hard, and talking about experiences you went through. It was important for us to make a safe space so we can talk freely and to express without shame" (Ambassadors Program interview, Gaza City).

This lack of space, both literally and figuratively, is detrimental to the overall mental health of Gazans. Speaking to the stigma and isolation men face in seeking mental health support, Dr. Yasser Abu Jamea' from the Gaza Mental Health Centre confirmed that the majority of male patients he sees, come to the center alone, rather than with their spouse, family member or friend. This differs greatly from the female patients he sees who come with their husbands or other family members. Dr. Yasser Abu Jamea' posits that this suggests a greater stigma associated with men seeking mental health support. Furthermore, the Centre has run awareness raising workshops in the past that target couples. He noted that it has always been harder to get men to attend than women. Moreover, Dr. Yasser Abu Jamea' explained that there has been a recent increase in men seeking help in the wake of the Great March of Return. This, he posits, is due largely to the fact that men are struggling with the guilt of not being able to protect their sons and feel responsible for not being able to provide for their children, they are not even able to provide hope for a better future.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Make space and plan to consult with men and integrate their feedback around all areas of intervention, especially if they themselves are not beneficiaries.

- Create safe spaces and consult with men, as well as offer emotional support if needed, as part of all gender programming.
- Incorporate a focus group with husbands of female beneficiaries prior to commencing an intervention targeting women. Initiate conversation and ask prompting questions around how they feel about their wives participating in the project. Ask what their concerns are, if any. Give them the opportunity to talk about the frustrations they are feeling in a judgement free environment! If conversations move towards GBV and other sensitive topics, rather than lecturing or correcting their view points, first let them speak. Make sure they feel heard, doing so is an important step in reducing defensiveness and can make them more open to consider new approaches etc. later on. At the end of focus group session, shift into delivering the 'masculinities training package' which should address many of the topics brought up in the focus groups.
- Subsequent field visits should first consult with female beneficiary, second with husbands, and third with the couple together. This ordering is intended to create an environment where female beneficiaries have the opportunity to speak about any challenges they are facing regarding their husbands vis-à-vis their projects. This also gives men a chance to speak about their feelings about the project in private and is a means of protection. Lastly, by talking to the two of them together, this reiterates the teamwork aspect of the masculinities approach. During the joint conversation, be sure to talk about the importance of co-supporting one another.
- In any intervention, if a participatory session is held with women, men should, in some way, also be consulted. This absolutely does not mean that men should always be present in the same session, or that every intervention for women needs to be matched with an intervention for men. Rather it means that collecting and incorporating men's perspectives should be part of community consultation, even when interventions target women.





4) FEMALE BENEFICIARIES TO CHANGE MASCULINITIES

In talking about the processes of change, it is important to note that not only men, but women – as mothers, mother-in-laws, wives, sisters, daughters – shape male compliance with masculinity demands. Men and women alike are fundamental to upholding hegemonic masculinity. Paradoxically, working with men and masculinities is not only about working with men! Just like women’s empowerment requires engaging men, working on men and masculinities also requires working with women. Because gender is relational, both men and women perpetuate gendered stereotypes. Wives, mothers, sisters and daughters all play an important role in shaping, teaching and encouraging certain behaviors, beliefs and roles. For example, it is not only fathers who tell their sons, “boys don’t cry”, “take care of your sister” etc. The recent IMAGES MENA Palestine study shows how women see themselves as “deserving” of discipline (violence) when they fall short in their roles as wives and mothers. These are the same women who are central to raising their sons and daughters to replicate traditional gender roles. Women are fundamentally important in the gender socialization of boys and men, in other words, in the “making of men” (Barker & Ricardo, 2005). Women reinforce their expectations of appropriate male roles and discourage attitudes and behaviors they do not see as masculine

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Work extensively with female Action Against Hunger staff to ensure common understanding of gender equality and its goals. Train staff to deliver ‘masculinities training package’ to female beneficiaries.
- Women working with female beneficiaries, remember to communicate the point that changing expectations of masculinity such as providing etc. is not only beneficial for them because it will ultimately contribute to more equality, but it is also beneficial to their marriage, and their family.
- Speaking to female beneficiaries about the way young boys and young girls are treated is an important starting point when working with women. Talk about how to more equitably distribute the chores they ask their children to help them with such as washing the dishes after dinner, sweeping the floor, making tea, going to the store, highlight that these should be distributed equally between children regardless of their gender.
- Mothers also should be encouraged not to instill notions of guardianship of brothers over their sisters. Instead, siblings should be taught to look out for each other, to help and stand up for each other, but as equals, not as one who needs the protection of the other.
- In addition to engaging women in order to help change norms around masculinities in Gaza, it is also important to work with them to raise their confidence. Livelihood projects should also incorporate an aspect of confidence and skills building around financial management. This training should also engage men by holding a joint workshop/training with both husband and wife using both the “carrot and the stick” method. Meaning, educate both men and women around women’s legal financial rights, and also suggest why a more equitable distribution is beneficial for both men and women.



5) ISLAMIC SCHOLARS AND CLERICS

Political Islam forms the scaffolding around which Gazan society now rests. Because Islam strongly influences the social, economic and political spheres of life in Gaza, it is crucial to understand how religion is used to legitimize, or de-legitimize, women's rights and gender equality.

Much of 'common religion', or religion that is practiced every day, is a result of local, regional and political interpretations. However, these interpretations are not necessarily grounded religious texts, rather they rest on interpretations that are susceptible to strategic renditions that perpetuate men's authority over women and their unequal access to power.

Many feminist scholars such as Fatima Mernissi, the well-known Moroccan professor of sociology, the Pakistani academic Asma Barlas and the Iranian Nobel Peace Prize winner Shirin Ebadi, as well as certain male religious scholars such as Dr. Khaled Abou El-Fadl strongly believe in the possibility of interpreting the Qur'an and Hadith in a gender-equitable manner. Engaging with scholars such as these can help to figure out culturally and religiously appropriate messaging for awareness and advocacy work around the topics of gender equality.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Having counter-statements and counter-interpretations to level back at beneficiaries when they cite Islamic teachings that they feel are justifications for their unequal behavior or beliefs would be very useful. Ultimately this can help to overcome an aspect of 'western imposition' that beneficiaries sometimes felt was attacking their religion, culture and way of being. Moreover, it can help support the adoption of reform-oriented and gender-equitable interpretation of Islam in Gaza
- Engage with Islamic scholars to compile a document containing commonly cited verses and teachings that beneficiaries use to justify unequitable behavior, values and assumptions. The document should then offer alternative interpretations, other contradicting verses, rebuttals and/or clarification of verse and teaching.
- Try to incorporate, as much as possible, Qur'anic verses and sayings that highlight equality, teamwork, respect etc. into 'masculinities training package' and lessons, advocacy, and trainings provided to beneficiaries around gender equality.



LIFE Palestine: Promoting the inclusion of Women and Youth in Peace building
through enhancing Livelihoods initiatives to Foster Entrepreneurship.
Funded by Catalan Agency for Development Cooperation (ACCD)

الحياة لفلسطين (تعزيز إدماج النساء والشباب في بناء السلام من خلال
تعزيز مبادرات سبل العيش لتعزيز روح المبادرة والحد من العنف الثقافي)
الممول من الوكالة الكاتالونية للتعاون للتطوير

Income Generating Activity (مشروع مدر للدخل)



SECTION 6: FURTHER RESOURCES, TOOLS AND APPROACHES

- UN Women Virtual Knowledge Centre- <http://www.endvawnow.org/en/modules/view/9-men-boys.html#48>
- EME Masculinidades y Equidad de Género- <http://www.eme.cl/>
- Promundo- <http://promundoglobal.org/>
- Manhood 2.0: A Curriculum Promoting a Gender-Equitable Future of Manhood- <https://promundoglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/PM-Manhood-2-0-curriculum-v12-2-E.pdf>
- Men's Action for Stopping Violence Against Women- <http://www.chsj.org/masvaw.html>
- The White Ribbon Campaign- <http://www.whiteribbon.ca/>
- One Man Can Toolkit developed by Sonke Gender Justice in South Africa- <http://genderjustice.org.za/project/community-education-mobilisation/one-man-can/one-man-can-toolkit/>
- MenCare, a global fatherhood campaign- <https://men-care.org/>
- Programme Ra- Abaad Lebanon- <https://promundoglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/ProgrammeRa.pdf>
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ANNEX A- DEFINING CORE CONCEPTS

Below is a summary of some core concepts and words used throughout the report.

Gender- Refers to expectations of the way that men and women should behave. It refers to the attitudes, roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a community or society determines is characteristic or uses to describes men, women, boys, and girls. It differs from sex which refers to biological reproductive organs.

Gender Roles- A set of social and behavioral rules and norms that someone is expected to adhere to according to one's sex. Gender roles are not just behaviors, but also relate to personal characteristics, emotions and attributes.

Gender Socialization- Refers to the process in which gender roles are taught to an individual starting from birth. These roles govern every aspect of a person's life; within the family, work place, peer group, school or community. **Masculinities-** Refer to a society's ideas about the roles, behaviors and attributes associated with being a man. It defines what makes a man, what is appropriate for men to say, do, feel, believe. The plural masculinities, rather than the singular, is used because it is believed that there are multiple forms of masculinity present at any given time

Femininities- Refer to a society's ideas about the roles, behaviors and attributes associated with being a woman.

Hegemonic Masculinity- Hegemonic masculinity can be understood as a dominant discourse; as the socially and culturally defined 'real man' which other men are measured and

defined by. The concept of hegemonic masculinity is important to understand because it identifies social pressures and societal expectations boys and men face. Hegemonic masculinity helps us to consider the multiple levels of power implicit within and between different masculinities, and masculinities and femininities.

Alternative Masculinities- Alternative masculinities refers to the fact that multiple masculinities co-exist at the same time in the same context. They are often understood in contrast to hegemonic masculinity. Understanding alternative masculinities is crucial for programming because the project of imagining positive and egalitarian masculinities is absolutely essential in addressing unhealthy or unequitable gender norms.

Gender Equality- Means women and men, girls and boys enjoy the same rights, resources, opportunities and protections regardless of their sex; it does not mean that that women and men have to become the same. The key to equality is the value and worth given to different genders is the equal. Gender equality requires individual's roles, preferences, behaviors, aspirations and responsibilities to be valued equally and afforded equal treatment.

Gender Inequality- Refers to different experiences based on one's gender where one receives less value, power, access, rights etc. because of their sex. For example, this can relate to unequal rights to employment, property, education, violence perpetrated due to



ones' gender, and unequal workloads based on gender.

Patriarchy- A system which creates and sustains male supremacy and female subordination. Patriarchy is a system characterized by current and historic unequal power relations between women and men whereby women are systematically disadvantaged and oppressed.

Gender Mainstreaming- Gender mainstreaming refers a gender equality perspective/approach being incorporated in all policies and programming at all levels and at all stages.

Women's Empowerment- The root word of 'empowerment' is 'power', it is therefore associated with power dynamics in social, economic, cultural, and political relations. Women's empowerment relates to an increased capacity to make autonomous decisions that transform these unfavorable power relations.

Privilege- Privilege occurs when the balance of power is unequal in a given relationship. Privilege is often invisible and privilege in one area such as economic, legal etc., impacts other areas such as food security educational attainment etc.

Violence- Defined as "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development, or deprivation." (WHO, 1996) Violence is not limited to physical harm. It can also be: emotional, verbal, psychological, economic, cultural and religious.

Gender-Based Violence- Any violent act that results in, or is likely to result in harm or suffering due to power imbalances based on gender, including threats of such acts in public or private life. Although most gender-based violence is inflicted by men on women and girls, but also between men and other men who transgress 'hegemonic' or socially held concepts of masculinity, as well as women against men.



ANNEX B- BACKGROUND AND HISTORY OF MASCULINITIES APPROACH

Attention to the importance of gender in policy and programming addressing human rights, poverty, hunger and disease was recognized as early as 1976 with the establishment of The United Nations Development Fund for Women. In many ways however, the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) forms the bedrock of today's international policy priorities for gender equality. It also set the ground work for the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995 which explicitly introduced the concept of gender mainstreaming as a primary strategy for the promotion of gender equality around the world, and today, forms a central pillar of mainstream development policies and programs (Parpart, 2014). As a result, major donor countries, international development agencies, and the UN treat "gender mainstreaming as the tool, and gender equality as the goal" (Cohn, Kinsella & Gibbings, 2004, p. 135). The framing set forth by these global efforts inspired the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and specifically Goal 3- Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women, and now the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which mainstreams gender throughout the implementation of the agenda as well as having a standalone Goal 5- Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all Women and Girls. The MDGs and SDGs led to women's human rights and gender equality being nearly universally endorsed by governments, donors, women's movements, civil society and other stakeholders. The trajectory of gender equality work has recently been further propelled by donor countries such as Canada and Sweden developing an explicitly 'feminist foreign policy'. The Beijing Platform for Action was an important policy reference point for gender in contexts of conflict and fragility and further contributed to the creation of a common agenda on gender equality in the context of peace and security in fragile and conflict affected states (FCAS). This focus was picked up on and fine-tuned with the passing of UNSCR 1325 on women, peace and security. When it was unanimously adopted in 2000, UNSCR 1325 was a watershed moment for international women's rights, particularly in FCAS (Cohn, 2004; Villellas, Urruita & Fisas, 2016; Valasek & Nelson, 2006).

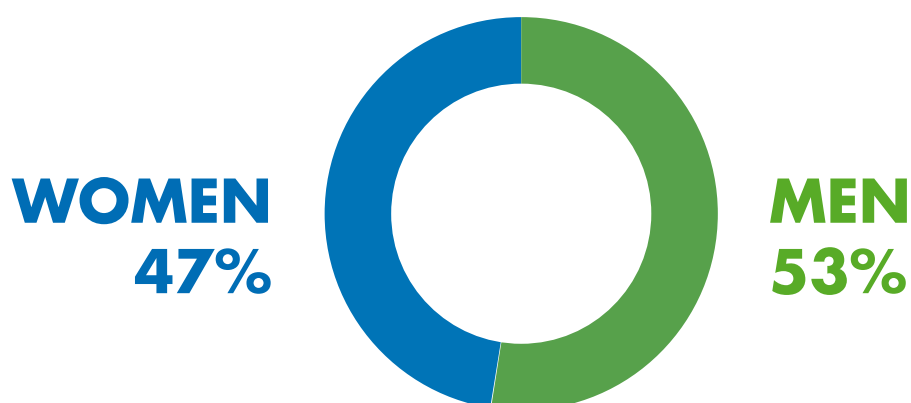
There is a new wave of feminism on the rise and this new wave incorporates the other half of gender— men— in hopes of achieving a more holistic understanding of issues related to attaining gender equality. This new wave of feminism was inspired by findings such as those presented in a recent report by the British & Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group which found that the exclusion of men and boys from their gender programming was a major impediment to the success of their gender equality interventions in Afghanistan. Playing off of the notion of gender-mainstreaming, some feminist theorists have labeled the inclusion of men and masculinities in development works as 'men-streaming' (Chant & Gutmann, 2002).



ANNEX C- RESEARCH TOOLS AND METHODOLOGY

This research utilized primary qualitative data. The recent release of the International Men and Gender Equality Survey in the Middle East and North Africa (IMAGES MENA) study, provided detailed data. IMAGES MENA collected data from 2399 individuals in the West Bank and Gaza. Although in the West Bank both qualitative and quantitative data was collected, due to the challenges of conducting research in Gaza, findings from the Gaza Strip were based on quantitative data only. Instead of replicating this research, the Consultant and Action Against Hunger opted for a qualitative research design in order to build on and flush out available data in the IMAGES MENA Study. Therefore, rather than utilizing commonly used tools and frameworks aimed at understanding gender dynamics, this study instead relies on the qualitative narratives and words of participants as the primary data source. data was collected during three field visits to the Gaza Strip in the spring/summer of 2018. The fieldwork relied on focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. Focus groups consisted of: one in Rafah with female beneficiaries of Action Against Hunger livelihood projects; one in Khan Yunis with husbands of female beneficiaries of Action Against Hunger livelihood projects; one in Gaza City with men engaged in Aisha's Ambassadors Program; one in Northern Gaza with female participants of non- Action Against Hunger livelihood projects; and one in Northern Gaza with the husbands of female beneficiaries of non- Action Against Hunger livelihood projects.

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS



39 Men + 35 Women = 74 TOTAL



Gender segregated focus group discussions helped to gain important insight about the lived experiences, feelings and opinions of Gazan men and women. They will help to highlight local challenges and trends in notions of masculinity as well as gender equality and GBV from the interactions that occur among the participants. Moreover, these participatory sessions champion men's and women's voice, their leadership and rights while offering an environment that was responsive and appropriate to the target audiences' cultural, emotional and practical needs.

The Consultant, along with Action Against Hunger Staff, conducted interviews in Arabic and English. In-depth interviews were digitally recorded and later transcribed. In addition to transcriptions, extensive notes were also taken during interviews.

ORGANIZATION	NUMBER OF INTERVIEWS	GENDER
Aisha Association for Woman and Child Protection	2	1 F / 1 M
Palestinian Center for Human Rights	1	F
Mukhtarah	1	F
Action Against Hunger	3	2 F / 1 M
Palestinian Rural Women's Society for Development	3	2 F / 1 M
Cooperative Society for Saving and Lending	1	F
Zakher Association for Developing of Palestinian Women Capacity	1	F
Palestinian Bar Association	1	M
Great March of Return	1	F
Women's Affairs Centre	1	F
Gaza Mental Health Center	1	M
Bait Al Mostaqbal Association	2	2 F
Center for Women's Legal Research & Counseling and Protection	1	F
	19	14 F / 5 M





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CANADA

Action Against Hunger
720 Bathurst St. Suite
500 Toronto, ON M5S 2R4
+1 416-644-1016
www.actioncontrelafaim.ca

FRANCE

Action Contre la Faim
14-16 Boulevard
Douaumont - CS 80060
75854 PARIS CEDEX 17
+33 1 70 84 70 70
www.actioncontrelafaim.org

SPAIN

Acción contra el Hambre
C/ Duque de Sevilla, 3
28002 Madrid
+34 900 100 822
www.accioncontraelhambre.org

UNITED KINGDOM

Action Against Hunger
1st Floor,
Rear Premises 161-163,
Greenwich High Rd,
London SE10 8JA
+44 (0)20 8293 6190
www.actionagainsthunger.org.uk

UNITED STATES

Action Against Hunger
One Whitehall Street 2nd
Floor New York, NY 10004
+1 (212) 967-7800
www.actionagainsthunger.org