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**WORKING WITH BOYS AND MEN FOR A  
CHANGE  
Lessons from Fiji**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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## **Abstract**

Male involvement in sexual and reproductive health and anti-violence interventions are two of the more common entry points in working with men to achieve gender equality. The most promising interventions are those that challenge gender norms, questioning men's views of themselves and stimulating their interest about gender equality in different ways. Although most interventions inevitably alter gender norms in an effort to change the behaviour of project recipients, if not executed in a gender-sensitive fashion, these interventions may exacerbate rather than alleviate existing inequalities. One important issue therefore is when, and to what extent, programming involving men should compromise on feminist goals.

The Men as Partners pilot programme and Women's Crisis Centre in Fiji worked with similar groups of men in two distinct ways. The former adopted a locally and culturally appropriate style of addressing men about gender issues and sexual and reproductive health, and the latter took a more radical, feminist, 'rights' stance in workshops with men regarding violence.

Through consultation with project participants, family members, project staff, and affiliated NGOs, the research raises questions and discusses the implications for on-going work with men in the field of gender and development. It draws some conclusions about the extent to which each intervention contributed to the transformation of attitudes among men towards equality, and emphasises the need for new 'men in development' strategies to be unapologetically feminist in their focus.

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## Abbreviations

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AIM	Addressing and Involving Men and Boys To Promote Gender Equality and End Gender Discrimination and Violence
BPA	Beijing Platform for Action
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination for all forms of Discrimination Against Women
DAWN	Development Alternatives for Women in a New Era
ECREA	Ecumenical Centre for Research Education and Advocacy
EGM	Emperor Gold Mining Company (Vatukoula, Fiji)
FMF	Fiji Military Forces
FWCC	Fiji Women's Crisis Centre
FWRM	Fiji Women's Rights Movement
FPAID	New Zealand Family Planning Association International Development
GAD	Gender and Development
HDI	Human Development Index
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo 1994)
IPPF	International Planned Parenthood Federation
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
MAP	Men as Partners
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	Non-government Organisation
RFHAF	Reproductive and Family Health Association of Fiji
RH	Reproductive Health
RH/SH-FP	Reproductive health, sexual health and family planning
STD / STI	Sexually Transmitted Disease / Sexually Transmitted Infection
SSV	Soqosoqo Vakamarama (Fijian Methodist church women's organisation)
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNCSW	United Nations Commission on the Status of Women
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
VAW	Violence Against Women
WAC	Women's Action for Change
WAD	Women and Development
WID	Women in Development

## Glossary

'kitchen'	Fijian colloquialism for a mistress or lover taken by a married man, e.g. "second kitchen"
kai idia	a characteristically Indo-Fijian behaviour as described by Fijians
kava	a non-alcoholic addictive drink
loloma	kindly love, reciprocity, Christian love
mataqali	clan
palangi	foreigner
tabua	whales teeth
taupei	the Fijian way of life
tokatoka	sub-lineage of <i>mataqali</i>
torocake	mutually move upwards
vakavanua	custom of the land
vanua	land, people and custom of Fiji
vasu	social rights of women and children through the relationship with women's brothers

## CHAPTER 1 The Introduction

It's not a man-woman thing anymore as adversaries. It's about how we can work in partnership. Realising what the problem is and how we can work in partnership (Shamima Ali 2004)

As the coordinator of the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre says above, gender inequalities have moved beyond an adversary dynamic to that of a partnership one. And as such, men are back in fashion within the aid and development business, this time to work in partnership with women in the gender equality revolution. They are the new constituency in the fight to realise women's rights and to achieve the Millennium Development Goal of empowering women<sup>1</sup>. When the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women held its forty-eighth session in March 2004, country representatives were urged to promote shared power between women and men "at home, in the community, in the workplace, and in the wider national and international communities" (UNCSW 2004:3). The Commission's conclusions formed part of a new global policy framework to create a central role for males in reaching this goal. This move supported the call for male involvement in gender and development a decade ago at the International Conference on Population and Development in 1994 ('ICPD') and the fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. Since then the topic of men's involvement in realising women's rights has been revisited at a number of international forums<sup>2</sup>, and it is now quite generally accepted, at the theoretical level, that men as a 'gendered category' (Chant and Gutmann 2000) are critical in achieving gender and development goals (Kabeer 2003).

However, actually involving men in projects that seek to empower women in developing countries is still relatively nascent and there are "few concrete guidelines as to where, when and how to include men in gender planning" (Chant 2000:8-9). Although an increasing collection of published studies evaluating the impact of male involvement indicate that men's involvement is promising (e.g. Lang 2002; Cleaver 2003; Ruxton 2004), many uncertainties about how to bring men in to gender and development efforts remain, and there are concerns that engaging with men risks reinforcing male dominance at the expense of women's empowerment, resulting in reversals of gains for women (Cornwall 1998; Blanc 2001; White, Greene & Murphy 2003; de Keijzer 2004).

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<sup>1</sup> Empowering women and achieving gender equality is the third of eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) agreed to by the General Assembly at the United Nations Millennium Summit, September 2000, see <http://undp.org/mdg>

<sup>2</sup> Other transnational conferences which put men on the gender agenda were the World Summit on Social Development in 1995 and 2000, the International AIDS Conference in 2000, the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS in 2001, and more recently the International AIDS Conference in 2004.

### ***Identification of Research Objectives***

One of the key issues in terms of bringing men in to gender and development practice is resistance to changing behaviours and beliefs, particularly if they are interpreted as being imposed by outsiders (Lang 2002:15). Projects engaging men, and women, that involve egalitarian concepts of human rights are often perceived as foreign and irrelevant (Obermeyer 1999) or characteristic of “wealthy western nations stressing the values of the individual” (Jolly 1996:184). Cultural imperialism is therefore a common accusation directed at many gender and development initiatives (Pearson 2000a; Jolly 2002), to the extent that ‘gender’ work is often toned down to counter resistance and encourage broader acceptance among men and women in the economic South. This toning down is of particular salience as it is one of the most controversial aspects of working with both women *and* men. On the one hand, there is an emphatic perspective that bringing men into gender and development work should be positioned fairly and squarely within a feminist agenda (Chant & Gutmann 2000; White 2000; Flood 2004). On the other, and in consonance with the majority of gender programmes - that is, those that work with women – subtler strategies outside of a radical feminist agenda are sometimes more effective to counter the danger of alienating people (Sarr 1991; Scheyvens 1998).

Whether strategies should be overtly feminist in their design or ‘watered down’ in more subtle ways for broader acceptance among the target population is one of the key challenges facing development programmes involving men as ‘gendered beings’ (Ruxton 2004). This research addresses this issue.

### ***Research Question and Strategy***

This thesis therefore aims to investigate empirically the legitimacy and efficacy of a development programme involving men that is not located specifically within a feminist agenda. The central research question is: can gender programming with men compromise on feminist issues to achieve gender equality? If so, to what extent can they do this and meet their gender equitable outcomes?

In order to explore some answers to this question, two contrasting, pioneering development programmes involving men in the Pacific are examined. Both are both located in Fiji in the South Pacific and work with similar groups of men, although they adopt markedly different strategies. One could be described as ‘toned down’ while the other could be described as ‘foreign and irrelevant’.

The primary case study, the Men as Partners<sup>3</sup> pilot project, attempted to address gender inequalities by using locally acceptable ideas and methods. It adopted a Christian focus to tackle reproductive health and gender issues, and was considered culturally appropriate. By way of contrast, the secondary case study, the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, could be described as 'foreign and irrelevant'. The organisation's male advocacy programme works with men to reduce gender-based violence utilising the principles of human and women's rights. They struggle to gain broad acceptance and their methods are considered culturally unsuitable, radical and divisive.

This thesis reviews the work of both programmes in terms of their ability to engender empathy among male project participants towards gender equality. Ultimately it aims to draw some conclusions on whether and to what extent male involvement in gender equality work can compromise on feminist goals and still meet strategic gender needs<sup>4</sup>. This study will suggest appropriate ways forward for working with men in the Pacific and in other developing countries in the fight for gender justice.

### **Rationale**

To date, limited attention has been paid to men as a 'gender' in the Pacific, and there are few known examples of work with men in this region<sup>5</sup>. This reflects historical and current trends to focus exclusively on women, despite the switch in the development sector from 'women in development' (WID) to 'gender and development' (GAD).

Most development interventions addressing women's subordinate position in Fiji are based on a WID ethos. WID projects generally target women independently from men, attempting to improve their position by offering them economic opportunities, or supporting them in their traditional domestic roles. However this logic ignores the inequitable lives of women and men. The gender and development 'GAD' approach, of which men's involvement has emerged, holds significantly more potential for redressing gender differences by engaging with women and

<sup>3</sup> The Men as Partners ("MAP") name has been officially trademarked by American organisation EngenderHealth, but it is also a generic term to describe the concept of male involvement in reproductive health as used by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). This thesis uses the acronym MAP in the same vein.

<sup>4</sup> Strategic gender interests and needs are part of a development planning framework first designed by Maxine Molyneux (1985) and developed by Caroline Moser (1986, 1993). Chapter Two discusses the framework in detail.

<sup>5</sup> When I was searching for relevant case studies, the New Zealand Agency for International Development (NZAID) knew of only one other project addressing men. This was a pilot project looking at the intersection of masculinities, mental health and violence, which was too early in its inception phase to review. Two others that I was aware of included a HIV/AIDS intervention and an adolescent reproductive health programme.

men, and necessitates buy-in, inclusion and contributions from men in the pursuit of equity and social justice (Rathgeber 1990:494).

Few attempts have been made to analyse the applicability of less overt strategies in transforming gender relations. In the Pacific, Scheyvens (1998) reviewed a Solomons Island programme and she argued that women's agency may be strengthened through working with women in their stereotype female roles. Scheyvens calls this approach 'subtle strategies', which applies to "any strategy that attempts to achieve profound, positive changes in women's lives without stirring up wide-scale dissent" (Scheyvens 1998:237). In a similar vein to Scheyvens' research with women in the Solomon Islands, this research analyses the 'subtle' efforts of the Men as Partners pilot project, which claimed to promote gender equity in a 'Fijian way'.

### ***Definitions***

In the course of my research, it became apparent that the concept 'gender' was problematic. First it provoked antagonistic feelings among women as well as men. Second, it was regarded by some as 'irrelevant'. Third, in the context of the development sector and gender and development policy, it really means 'women' as opposed to 'women in relation to men'. It is helpful therefore to provide some backdrop to the terms 'gender' and 'development'. What do 'development' and 'gender' mean? What relevance and applicability do these terms hold for Fijian men and women? These are two concepts in particular that are debated by scholars, practitioners, donors and recipients as part of development studies and practice.

'Development' itself is one of the most contested terms within the development sector. It is a confluence of theories and corresponding practices have been developed to improve the standard of living in Third World countries<sup>6</sup> and enable these countries to participate in liberal, capitalist economies. Development is therefore generally synonymous with 'modernisation' (Myrdal 2002), and is underpinned by a core thread of assumptions originating from the West, in particular it has been described as:

... a notion of historical change derived from Western European secular and scientific thought ... more linear than cyclical ... the most common definitions of development [rely] heavily on western scientific thought and reflect western cultural and religious norms (such as equality), to the effects of the historical experience of industrialization in western Europe and North America (Charlton 1997:7).

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<sup>6</sup> I use the terms 'Third World and 'developing' with some caution, aware that many Third World people are elites with standards of living comparable to the West, and there exists widespread disparity, division and much heterogeneity within 'developing' communities. Furthermore, 'developing' implies a linear progression that all countries must travel upon, undermining alternative and indigenous ideas about development.

Implicit in the concept ‘development’ is the idea that all developing countries are developing towards the same goal, or state of development, as for Western countries. Economically speaking, it refers to the process of integrating countries into the global capital market, and most often this process is unquestioned.

Development however encompasses a range of approaches from a diverse number of actors who contribute to the building of other people’s societies, building which is increasingly concerned more with “achieving intangible goals” (Hintjens 1999:385) than meeting immediate needs. Intangible goals include changing attitudes and social roles such as the position of men and women in society. Development discourse includes analyses of the concept of ‘development’ from both Western and non-Western thinkers. In addition to increasing economic wealth, Western notions of development include terms such as human rights, and recipient countries of development aid are now more likely to question the fundamental notions of development. A definition of development as articulated by Pacific Islanders is expressed as “capacity building” (Secretariat of the Pacific Community 2001:4), but as Ravuvu (in Yabaki & Norton 2004:5) suggests, development or ‘progress’ means to some Fijians “a man of the big world, smart and skilled at handling national or international affairs”. Fijians tend to view development with a degree of ambivalence, concerned about maintaining a balance between traditional and modern.

Often there is an expectation with more people-centred development assistance that traditional, cultural practices and beliefs align with Western standards, for example, the roles of, and relations between, men and women. Again, the implication is that societies are moving from ‘traditional’ to ‘modern’. Therefore the development assistance operated by the majority of developed countries, and operating in the majority of developing countries, in terms of improving women’s material and social status, otherwise known as ‘gender and development’ is primarily designed on the assumptions of modernisation. At this point there is often resistance to ‘development’ by recipients of development assistance.

Ambivalence also exists about the term ‘gender’. This is not surprising as it is perhaps one of the least understood Western words among people in developing countries (El-Bushra 2000). It is used interchangeably with ‘sex’ – the biological disposition of a human being, that is, woman or man (or both) – and is also used in place of the word ‘women’, particularly at project and policy planning levels. It is “a highly specialised word, poorly understood by the average English-speaker, and few words exist for it in other languages” (El-Bushra 2000:56).

A social constructionist understanding of ‘gender’ is articulated in the Oxfam Gender Training Manual:

“People are born female or male, but learn to be girls and boys who grow into women and men [who] are taught what the appropriate behaviours and attitudes, roles and activities are for [us] and how [we] should relate to other people. This learned behaviour is what makes up gender identity and determines gender roles” (Williams, Seed and Mwau 1994)

Yet despite this clear definition, uncertainties and misunderstandings arise out of cultural differences in Fiji and elsewhere in the Pacific. Both the terms ‘gender’ and ‘empowerment’ in the context of gender and development in the Pacific, is taken to imply “unequal preference for women” and some countries find it hard to understand why there is so much preoccupation with gender (Secretariat of the Pacific Community 2001:23).

In the Pacific Islands, a common interpretation of ‘gender’ is that “women should be more powerful than men” (Secretariat of the Pacific Community 2001:23). This is also the case in Fiji, as commented by one of my female research participants, who said that women’s empowerment and gender is “when the woman is on top of the man” – in a metaphorical sense of course. The definition of gender is therefore unsurprisingly confusing, especially if the packaging of such a foreign, challenging concept does not take into account the ideas, wishes, needs and priorities of women and men.

Another problematic is when ‘women’ are characterised as a homogenous social group or unit of analysis when there exists widespread disparity, division and heterogeneity within ‘communities’ of women - and men - as gendered beings. Along the gender matrix there are hierarchies of class, ethnicity, age and religion between and among women and men. This is clearly illustrated by the diverse range of women’s groups in Fiji for example, from more controversial Western-based rights organisations such as the Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre, the Fiji Women’s Rights Movement and Women’s Action for Change (WAC), to the more indigenous rural based women’s groups such as the Soqosoqo Vakamarama (SSV)<sup>7</sup> and the Fiji Muslim Women’s League. Often the work of these groups do not complement each other, to the point of clashing on key issues regarding women’s empowerment and women’s role in development. Lastly, on a development planning level, while policy prescriptions and general

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<sup>7</sup> The SSV is a Methodist church women’s organisation set up in 1929, with a membership of approximately 22,000 women (Yabaki and Norton 2004).

rhetoric has changed from ‘women’ to ‘gender’, women in isolation from men remain the focus of analysis (Schoeffel 2004).<sup>8</sup>

### ***Thesis Outline***

To initiate the discussion on the two Fijian programmes working with men, Chapter Two introduces gender and development theory. This chapter maps the development of policy and programming addressing women’s subordinate position from one that focuses on women alone, or ‘WID’, to one that addresses gender equality in terms of women in relation to men, or ‘GAD’. The arguments for and against including men in gender work is reviewed, and it is demonstrated that despite the risks and resistance to working with men in what has historically been a women’s domain, the potential benefits far outweigh the hazards.

Debating the applicability and relevance of involving men in gender and development work at a theoretical level is only half of the equation. The second half is considering the practical dimensions of including men. These issues are discussed in Chapter Three. Here pioneering examples of male involvement in gender equality work are discussed, including popular entry points for working with men. The second half of this chapter outlines the criteria for evaluation of the two case studies, based on a combination of two theoretical frameworks.

Having established the ‘why’ and ‘how’ in terms of working with men in Chapters Two and Three, the physical, social and cultural context where the theoretical and practical arguments will be challenged follows in Chapter Four. This chapter looks at the macro and micro factors underpinning gender relations in Fiji, and addresses the wider implications of the Men as Partners and Fiji Women’s Crisis Centres approaches in the context of Fiji’s culture, social development infrastructure, and official commitments to women’s advancement.

The research process and methodology adopted to review the two case studies is discussed in Chapter Five. An institutional analysis of the primary case study is undertaken in Chapter Six, where the Men as Partners programme background, staffing and content is reviewed. Chapter Seven introduces the ‘contrasting’ Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre case study. The two programmes are then brought together in Chapter Eight through a comparative analysis, where both projects

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<sup>8</sup> For example in the Fiji National Council of Women’s (NCW) response to the Government’s Draft Strategic Plan, the NCW discusses ‘gender and development’ as it relates entirely to women (National Council of Women 2002:16-19).

are structured in a ‘compare-contrast’ format enabling some conclusions to be formed in terms of their ability to meet the evaluation criteria outlined in Chapter Three.

Chapter Nine summarises the findings in Chapter Eight and discusses the main conclusions of this research, and its practical implications for future work with men in the Pacific and elsewhere.

## **CHAPTER 2 The Theory: Women, Gender, Men, and Development**

### ***Introduction***

The latent potential of men to contribute to gender equitable development is no epiphany, and reflects shifting theoretical trends in the development sector. Since the 1970s, feminist-inspired development discourse has debated the various ways in which to address inequalities between women and men. Razavi and Miller (1995) provide an excellent account of the frameworks shaping the debate and informing policy and practice. The two key frameworks they discuss are broadly categorized as ‘women in development’ (WID) and ‘gender and development’ (GAD). These frameworks have been widely cited in literature concerning the improvement of women’s material and social status. Along this WID to GAD theoretical continuum has seen an inevitable focus on men since “gender is a living system of social interactions, not a stack of watertight boxes. What affects the social position of women and girls must also affect the social position of men and boys” (Connell 2000:1).

This chapter reviews the theory as a means of understanding where men fit in to the picture. Its key purpose is to substantiate the reasons for including men in gender and development planning and practice, reviewing the support and benefits, opposition to, and difficulties involving men and boys in achieving gender equality. The practical question of ‘how’ is then explored in Chapter Three, which sets the scene for the analysis of my primary and secondary case studies, Men as Partners and the Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre.

### ***Gender in Development Planning***

Early ‘development’ as a sector and industry in the 1950s and 1960s was based on the principles of modernisation in that all countries were progressing in a linear fashion, particularly in terms of economic growth. It was a time of post-War reconstruction in the West, consolidation of industry and the birth of international institutions and charters, such as the United Nations in 1945 and the World Bank and International Monetary Fund in 1944. The consensus of the day was that economic growth would raise the standard of living through ‘take off and trickle-down’ and that the right mix of land, labour and capital would increase the living standards and well-being of poor women, men and their families (Cleves-Mosse 1993).

By the end of the first development decade in 1970 it was apparent that the position of women in the economic South was at best static, at worst in decline, as population growth was

becoming an issue and basic needs were not being met. While relief and welfare aid went to women the economic aid generally went to men (Buvinic 1986; Moser 1989; Townsend 1993) and since relief and welfare programmes had low economic value, they were assigned low priority in planning, resources, and research and women remained on the development periphery. However a dedicated 'women in development' discourse was to emerge.

The women in development debate, also referred to as 'gender and development', is underpinned by three main theoretical stances, or frameworks, within which are embedded a varying set of assumptions leading to the creation of different strategies for the participation of women in development (Rathgeber 1990:489). They are the liberal approach or 'women in development' (WID), the Marxist approach or 'women and development' (WAD), and the socialist approach, otherwise known as 'gender and development' (GAD) (Bandarage 1984; Rathgeber 1990, Razavi & Miller 1995).<sup>9</sup>

A number of factors encouraged the writing and thinking about women's subordinate position in development planning and practice beginning in the early 1970s. Prominent amongst them were the publication of Ester Boserup's *Women's Role in Economic Development* (1970), the promotion of equal rights by both the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, the transnational women's movement, and civil liberty struggles in the United States and ex-colonies, particularly in parts of Africa.

Most significantly it was Boserup's book that impacted the mainstream development industry. Boserup provided evidence to show that men and women were affected differently by development efforts and her statistics revealed a twist on the 'usual' division of labour. Women actually played a key role in economic activity, and the lives of women in developing countries couldn't have been further from the Western domestic template of housewife and nuclear family. Furthermore, Third World women differed greatly within countries and across borders. Although Boserup had her critics her book set the scene for the addition of new women-dedicated policy in the development sector (Cleves-Mosse 1993).

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<sup>9</sup> 'Women, the environment and development' and 'gender, the environment and development' (WED and GED) have also influenced programming. While much of the theory has been compartmentalized in to these frameworks for ease of explanation, a lot of the writing and practice is blurred, and a fusion of WID, WAD, GAD, GED theoretical underpinnings exist in the mission, values and projects of many organisations.

### Women in Development

The women in development (WID)<sup>10</sup>) perspective, or ‘liberal’ perspective, whose origins lie in the Boserup book era, has steered women and gender planning for developing countries for well over three decades. With modernization empathies, projects based on WID theory have traditionally focused on integrating women into the existing economic development model and have been readily institutionalised into the mainstream, influenced by the endorsement of WID policy by the United States Agency in 1974.

Despite WID’s popularity over the past thirty years, the principal complaints about WID is that it frames women’s roles in development in economic as opposed to equality terms, and is overly focused on women at the exclusion of men giving rise only to “partial solutions” (Levy, Taher & Vouhé 2000). Tinker and Jaquette (1997) argue that it is because of these reasons that WID policy has stood the test of time, dominating the design of women and gender projects.

Caroline Moser (1989) identifies three key approaches belonging in the WID school: ‘equity’, ‘anti-poverty’, and ‘efficiency’ and assesses these approaches in terms of their ability to meet practical and strategic gender needs. The ‘equity’ approach was the original, albeit unsuccessful, WID model that challenged the longstanding assumption that modernization, and its supposed trickling down of economic benefits to the poor, resulted in gender equality. The equity approach highlights women’s contribution to development through their work inside and outside the household, and demands that their ‘practical needs’ like a cash income for example, be addressed. However it also demands that inequality between women and men in the public and private spheres is challenged. Moser (1989:1810) categorises this latter demand as a “strategic gender need” where men are expected to share “in a manner that entails women from all socio-economic classes gaining and men from all socio-economic classes losing, through positive discrimination policies if necessary” (see also Momsen in Scheyvens 1998:238). This redistribution of power was not surprisingly unattractive to most development planners. Therefore ‘equity’ did not gain any momentum and the approach was “effectively dropped by the majority of implementing agencies” (Moser 1989:1811).

While the equity model was generally shunned, the more pragmatic and less socially and politically confrontational WID approaches of anti-poverty (women as recipients) and efficiency (women as producers) were taken up more readily (Moser 1989; Rathgeber 1990). The anti-

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<sup>10</sup> The term ‘WID’ was first used by the Washington arm of the Society for International Development, whose Women’s Committee pushed for Boserup’s research to be recognised by development policy makers at the time (Maguire in Rathgeber 1990).

poverty approach distances itself from blatantly tampering with inequitable relations between women and men, instead focusing on the ‘female face’ of poverty. Its policies aim to reduce gendered income variables and increase women’s productive capacity, thereby subtly redressing the balance of power within the household (Moser 1989). However, because anti-poverty projects ignore the critical issues of resource access, such as women’s limited control of resources and financial aid within the household and wider community, and the cultural constraints in terms of women’s second-class social status and burdensome domestic roles, the anti-poverty approach does not have the strategic ‘reach’ of the equity approach.

The prevailing WID approach has been the efficiency model (Moser 1989). ‘Efficiency’ efforts to improve women’s subordinate position are based on the notion of the value of each individual’s economic participation and the idea that this economic participation is linked with equity. The promotion of the efficiency model was justified on this basis and eradicating women’s oppression was thought to be fast-tracked through integrating more women into formal, working, public life. Because lack of equality is aligned with a lack of equity, the idea behind the efficiency argument is that if women are given equal opportunity they will achieve equity and gender-based oppression will be eliminated. One problem is that this assumes that the agencies and institutions steering economic interaction and other forms of social relations, treat all individuals with access to them fairly, and that the results from interaction with these institutions will be the same regardless of gender and other variables, such as class and race.

WID’s emphasis on women’s role in economics and its tendency to treat women as instruments of growth concerns critics of WID, and it is argued that the ‘free’ care economy and the “invisible work of wives, children, mothers and sisters” have contributed to gains in the “capitalistic production of commodities” (Michel 1995:58; see also Kabeer 1994). WID has therefore been accused as too market-oriented and too concerned with superficial practical issues such as women’s access to resources like a cash income within the existing unequal matrix of gender relations (Kabeer 1994; Young 1997). Because policies based on the anti-poverty and efficiency arguments target women in terms of economics, WID ‘misses the boat’ and women’s disadvantaged position runs the risk of sliding backwards rather than improving<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Moser (1989) points out that the efficiency and anti-poverty models gained popularity particularly in times of economic dis-ease, for example, the oil crisis of the 1970s, and the economic restructuring and recovery of Third World debt in the 1980s. As countries in the economic South move further towards a capitalist model, these approaches stand to gain, not lose, momentum.

A woman's heavy workload spread among the home, workplace and community is largely ignored in WID policy, as is the fact that many women in developing countries are the heads of low-income households and are required to work even harder to provide for the family (Moser 1989). Therefore WID has been accused of neglecting the multifarious nature of women's lives in terms of their productive, reproductive and community management roles. Kabeer's (1994:275) explanation of these 'triples roles' is that "*Productive and reproductive* roles refer to 'income-earning activities' and 'children/domestic labour' respectively, while *community management* roles cover the 'collective' aspects of production" [emphasis in original]. Although more recent arguments dismiss the 'triple' label in favour of 'multiple' as the gender division of labour has been reformulated under economic adjustment policies (Levy, Taher & Vouhé 2000:90), projects that do not take women's inequitable and multiple workload into account tend to keep them on the back foot, leading to "overload and exhaustion" (Sweetman in Chant 2000:10).

The reinforcement of sex stereotypes and inequitable gender norms is also an issue with critics of WID. Not only are women treated as an identifiable single category (Cornwall in Chant 2000:9), WID-based anti-poverty initiatives choose to focus on feminine projects and income-generation activities in nutrition, cooking, sewing, childcare and health (Schoeffel 1994:368). These focus areas were and still are regarded by many as women-only interests, that is, activities related to the female domain of the domestic, including the welfare of children and young women, areas which are 'no-go zones' for men, serving to reinforce gender norms and marginalize men from family life (Connell 2003).

It has also been said that the popular WID strategies falling under the anti-poverty and efficiency models, although quick to address basic survival and practical needs, are slow to address male and female relationships, ultimately stealing from projects their potential for transformation (Chant 2000). The lack of attention to and analysis of men and women means that WID projects generally ignore the nature and source of oppression (Kabeer 1994; Razavi & Miller 1995; Beneria & Sen 1997), safely skirting around any focus on men and their part in women's subordination (see Table 1, page 17). Sweetman (in Chant & Gutmann 2000:36) warns that:

Continuing to work with women only – for example – targeting female-headed households as beneficiaries of funds earmarked for 'gender and development' – has allowed development organisations to side-step the uncomfortable issues associated with 'interfering' in relations between men and women within the household.

However, although WID tends to ignore relationships between men and women, and integrate women into development on unequal terms, significant social change has occurred as a result of WID programmes. Some have the view that the more practical gender initiatives such as welfare, anti-poverty and efficiency approaches have served as a transformational gender tool and eventually led to strategic gender changes. For example, income-generation opportunities have helped arm some women with more independence and power and as a means to contest men's authority within marriages and partnerships (Cornwall 2002), while for others increased social exposure through work opportunities has given rise to a slow but steadily emerging gender and class consciousness (Mbilinyi 1993). Other women, realizing how indispensable they are, are steering their own development through the "collective labour in the ... interests of the ... community" (Tadesse in Michel 1995). Furthermore, subtler strategies of a more practical nature outside of a radical strategic feminist agenda are sometimes more effective in terms of avoiding the risk of alienating men, and women, from participating in, and benefiting from, development projects (Scheyvens 1998).

In addition, some WID advocates have found that the gender inequality agenda is more effective "if demands for social justice and equity were carefully linked to mainstream development concerns" (Razavi & Miller 1995:12) and early WID discourse did yield some positive beginnings for women. The women's movement grafted issues of equal rights and equality of opportunity onto the international development agenda, providing inspiration for the International Women's Year in 1975 and ushering in the United Nations Decade for Women (1976-1985). As a result, women as a constituency in development became increasingly visible politically, wielding a set of development requisites much more sophisticated than ever before. The three United Nations world conferences on women encouraged networking, debate, advocacy, and dedicated research, "publicizing the often previously invisible role of women in the economic and social development of their countries" (Moser 1989:1799)<sup>12</sup>. But although the Decade put the 'woman' issue onto the legislative agenda in many Third World countries, there lacked any substantial analyses of, and redistribution of resources and power between, men and women (Razavi & Miller 1995).

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<sup>12</sup> Conferences were held in Mexico City 1975, Copenhagen 1980, Nairobi 1985 (and a post-decade conference in Beijing 1995). Female delegate numbers grew from 6,000 in 1975 to 15,000 in 1985 (150% increase). 133 governments participated in 1975 and 157 in 1985 (19% increase). By 1995 in Beijing, there were 30,000 female delegates (500% up from 1975) and 189 countries represented (43% up from 1975) (Seager 1997:13). Legal equality; economic contributions and status; control over bodies and control of violence against women; and world peace, were the four major issues to come out of the Decade (Tinker & Jaquette 1987).

### Women and Development

Midway through the 1970s there emerged a different response to women in development. The women and development (WAD) perspective challenged WID's anti-poverty and efficiency models. Its diagnosis of women's subordinate position was influenced by Marxist thought, analysing women's second-class labour status in the subsistence sector, and it accused the existing system of taking advantage of women's unpaid labour in the home (Kabeer 1994). With its theoretical underpinnings connected with dependency theory<sup>13</sup>, feminist Marxists considered women to have always been part of the development process, especially through the provision of this 'free' labour, and that their subordinate position would only improve if institutional structures changed (Jaquette 1982).

The integrity of Marxist analysis stimulated important debate about the intrinsically oppressive structures of class and race, and by design is more aligned with WID's 'equity' approach mentioned earlier. But Marxist perspectives were either too focused on class, ignoring gender relations, or, radical Marxist feminists focused heavily on sexual inequality, making sweeping assumptions and generalizations about the 'great Western patriarchy' while ignoring other structural and socio-economic factors pertaining to women and men in developing countries (Bandarage 1984; Kabeer 1994). Although WAD analysis never consolidated its position in the ongoing women in development debate, it foreshadowed a shift in thinking. In particular, its penchant for equity and structural change set the scene for a movement away from women in isolation to men, to the relational aspects of women and men in a range of settings, and how this affects, and is affected by, development efforts.

### Gender and Development

The relational emphasis on men and women introduced a new term 'gender' to describe interventions improving women's subordinate position. Under the theoretical matrix cited earlier, GAD ideas about women and development are based on socialist feminist perspectives (Rathgeber 1990; Razavi & Miller 1995) and GAD is also known as the 'gender and class' approach (Beneria & Sen 1997) or the 'empowerment' approach (Moser 1989). It incorporates "lessons learned from WID failures and WAD limitations" (Visvanathan 1997:23) and is closely linked to the least popular WID model of equity.

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<sup>13</sup> Dependency theory was based on Marxism and was initially a persuasive set of ideas promising to be the foundations of a winning challenge to the failing modernisation 'take off and trickle down' project. Dependency theory argued that poverty and underdevelopment were externally perpetuated by 'core' Western capitalist countries who exploited the Third World at the 'periphery' for their own economic advancement.

Gender and development (GAD) ideas emerged in the mid-1980s at the end of the United Nations Decade for Women. At this stage the three world conferences on women had really extended the gender agenda and women's agency at this level put the spotlight on macro-economic policies and their effect at the micro-level on women and girls (Tinker & Jaquette 1997). New writing by Third World women also aroused interest in alternative development approaches like 'empowerment' and 'participation' (e.g. Sen & Grown 1987) with an emphasis on locally defined development needs.

In contrast to WID's orientation towards the economy, the GAD approach is inherently suspicious of the market, pessimistic about its role in women's development and the "power from 'cash in hand'" (Young 1997:53). In doing so it moves beyond the economic to the social and psychological in an attempt to understand inequalities in terms of relations between women and men. As Young (1997:52) articulates "GAD focuses on the 'fit' between family, household, and organisation of both political and economic spheres" rejecting the division of the public and private lives of women inherent in both WID and WAD theory<sup>14</sup>. GAD analyses women's oppression in terms of women and men, and requires a breakdown of traditional gender relations and a reconstruction of new designed and defined gender roles in order to achieve equality.

In this way GAD projects are 'strategic' under Moser's (1989) thesis, recognising "the subordination of women and its injustice" (Levy, Taher & Vouhé 2000:90). A GAD project may challenge the division of labour, work to strengthen women's reproductive rights, or redesign legal, inheritance and land laws. These types of interventions are working at a level that requires the analysis of women's position in relation to men. They confront cultural stereotypes and demand the redistribution of power and resources in their efforts to reconfigure male and female relations in the private and public spheres.

The following table explains the key methodological differences between the WID and GAD approaches and shows how the analysis of male and female relations is integral to GAD.

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<sup>14</sup> A number of writers have considered the 'public/private dichotomy', that is, the productive and reproductive compartmentalization of women's lives. Refer to Rathgeber (1990) Kabeer (1994) and Braig (2000).

	<b>WID – Women in Development</b>	<b>GAD – Gender and Development</b>
<b>Diagnosis:</b>	Women as unit of analysis for women's subordination 	Relations between women and men as unit of analysis for women's subordination 
<b>Implementation:</b>	Women-focused objectives, strategies and activities 	Focus on women, men, or women and men. Projects designed on basis of strategic choice 
<b>Monitoring and Evaluation:</b>	Women-only indicators measuring changes in the situation of women 	Indicators comparing women and men (combined or separate) measuring relative changes in the situation of women and men 

Table 1: The Gender Relational Aspect of GAD, adapted from Levy, Taher & Vouhé (2000:88).

Efforts to work with women and men in a GAD sense should emphasize the male biases in the “institutions, cultures and practices that sustain gender equality along with other forms of domination, such as race and class” (White 1997:21-22). White argues that all forms of power must be questioned in GAD projects, from the personal and professional to the “gendered logic” (Cleaver 2003:xiii) of politics and institutions in the global system.<sup>15</sup>

Because GAD does not sidestep the issue of male and female relations, and power, that WID is prone to do by focusing primarily on women, GAD-based projects are considered radical, meeting with strong resistance at the local, national and international levels, as efforts at redistributing power pose threats to conventional gender patterns. This is why many regard GAD as unwarranted “cultural interference” (Rathgeber in Chant & Gutmann 2000:20) or cultural imperialism (Pearson 2000a; Jolly 2002) treading on development ethics and tampering with culture (Tinker & Jaquette 1997) and there is a reluctance to intervene in a GAD way for fear of being culturally insensitive and disrespectful (Gupta 2000). Remember these sorts of protests confronted advocates of the WID equity approach earlier on, despite the call for empowerment and fundamental change by Third World women themselves (e.g. Sen & Grown 1987).

However it is difficult to know when to interpret these protests as legitimate reasons for not implementing GAD projects. On the one hand, the ‘cultural interference’ argument may be one

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<sup>15</sup> It must be remembered that this is extraordinarily difficult because even in cultures out of which GAD is promoted, let alone in developing country settings, truly implementing gender equality is complicated. For example when Tina Wallace (1998:170) talks about institutionalising gender in the United Kingdom, she notes that “none of the NGOs working on gender in development ... had managed to break the male domination within their boards or even at senior or corporate management levels ... and the organisational cultures within these NGOs has changed little in favour of women”.

of convenience to maintain the *status quo*, because while projects addressing gender inequalities may be considered interfering with culture, development interventions adjusting economic and class inequalities are not (Mehta 1991). On the other, we cannot ignore the prospect that women and men in the economic South may not embrace gender equity in a Western sense, and in fact some women may not favour it at all (Levy, Taher & Vouhé 2000). Women are adept at operating within their specific cultural framework for social and economic gain (Kandiyoti 1997). They may not desire radical 'structural change', they are not always powerless, and may not necessarily want what Western women aspire to. And lastly, if communities feel that projects are a result of an externally imposed agenda, they may very well feel resistant and/or only comply with behavioural change for the duration of a project (Lang 2002:40).

Yet despite the protests and threats to conventional gender patterns and the risk of irrelevance or backlash from implementing GAD projects at the grassroots level, the call for gender change has come from the top. Promoting gender equality and empowering women is a priority strategic gender interest and GAD seems to have replaced WID in the development sector. As a Millennium Development Goal, policy documents of most players – governments, multi-lateral agencies and non-government organisations (NGOs) – now reflect a broad comprehension of practical and strategic gender goals in their programmes and there appears an ideological sanctioning of the shift from WID to GAD in mainstream development circles (Harrison in Chant 2000:9).<sup>16</sup>

The development and adoption of GAD policy design is now becoming commonplace and it is out of the GAD theoretical school that men, and their concerns, have begun to be at least considered, at most, embraced.

### ***Men's Debut in Gender and Development***

Thinking about men and gender relations in development surfaced in the early 1990s (e.g. Silberschmidt 1991) and amalgamated with writing on men and masculinities, consideration of men's power and privilege as both an obstacle and an opportunity in improving the lives of women, and men, in the economic South is steadily being integrated into more gender-based development interventions. Projects including men, particularly those addressing violence,

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<sup>16</sup> Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss in detail, it must be pointed out that despite the fact that GAD appears to have replaced WID, a cynical view is that the most that has been replaced is language and letterhead. The 'lip-service' nature of the shift to GAD can be found in observations made by Longwe (1997), Wallace (1998), Armfed (2000), and Hawthorne (2004), who argue that women and gender issues largely remain ghettoised in a WID fashion.

sexuality and fatherhood, have begun to proliferate (White 2000), as is taking ‘men’ into account as a gendered constituency in their own right (Chant 2000).

Simplifying the thinking on their involvement in gender programming, there are two primary reasons for focusing on men. In very basic terms, they are the needs of women (or ‘men are the problem’), and the needs of men (‘men have problems’). The first argues that without men, gender interventions can only go so far and so men’s ‘buy in’ is essential to achieving gender equality. The second is related to the first. A focus on the needs of men is important because not all men are winners in the development process (Kajifusa in Chant 2000:10; Cleaver 2000), just as not all women are the losers (Sweetman 1998). Men have problems too, some which are exacerbated by women’s changing position. Both these perspectives reflect the ‘relational’ emphasis in GAD theory, because as echoed in Connell’s words quoted at the beginning of this chapter, gender is neither static nor watertight. Any project impacting women’s lives will by default impact those of men.

### The Needs of Women

The upsurge among Third World development planners to consider men’s involvement and interests in the gender policy arena really gained momentum after the much-cited International Conference for Population and Development (‘ICPD’) in Cairo in 1994. This conference broke new ground in gender and development thinking as it clearly advocated the involvement of men and boys in achieving the empowerment of women and girls:

Men play a key role in bringing about gender equality since, in most societies, men exercise preponderant power in nearly every sphere of life, ranging from personal decisions regarding the size of families to the policy and programme decisions taken at all levels of Government... The equal participation of women and men in all areas of family and household responsibilities, including family planning, child-rearing and housework, should be promoted and encouraged by Governments (United Nations 1994:ch 4).

In the following year at the Fourth World Conference for Women in Beijing, there was further advocacy for men’s inclusion. The Beijing Platform for Action (‘BPA’) reiterated the human rights dimension of equality and that equitable relations between women and men are a precondition for social justice, development and peace. Like the promises made at the ICPD, the BPA promoted the inclusion of men in the process to achieve these aims, particularly in the sphere of reproductive health. It urged the development of “programmes to educate and enable men to assume their responsibilities to prevent HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases” and “encourage men to participate fully in all actions towards equality” (Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, paragraphs 108e and 25).

In fact, some have suggested that the AIDS phenomenon really put the pressure on the need to consider men to improve the social and economic status of women, and after two decades of pioneering research in the field of HIV/AIDS, the search to understand and curb transmission of the disease has addressed taboos about sex, gender power, and male behaviour, as well as the wider social, cultural, economic and political concerns (Gupta 2000; Wainaina 2003). As a result of this research people started asking: how can women fight against AIDS without the cooperation of men?

The reality of recognising the gender dimension, that is, women *and* men, in health issues such as HIV/AIDS was one among many deciders in terms of extending policy and projects beyond a women-only focus.

### **Gendered Development Disparities**

Despite the plethora of programmes addressing women's subordinate position, men, by and large, are still in the driver's seat in the spheres of production and social reproduction while women are most disadvantaged (Greig, Kimmel & Lang 2000).

Men make the majority of decisions in the private and public spheres and gender bias is still prevalent at all levels in politics and the institutions that administer development policy on a world scale. For example, women comprise 5% of the Board of Governors at the World Bank, while at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) they total 2%. At Board Director level, women constitute 10% at the World Bank and a mere 4% at the IMF (WEDO 2002). Even at OXFAM, an international development leader in terms of gender policy and practice, only 6 out of 23 board members are female (Wallace 1998).

Women's disadvantaged occupational distribution serves to marginalize them as they "earn less, own less and control less" than men (Vickers 1991:15), and work harder and longer hours to survive. Despite the fast paced growth of the manufacturing industry in many Third World countries, women are still the minority in the regulated employment sector, and wage disparity between women and men is wide. Traditional gender relations also dictate that where women are active in the 'paid' production sphere, they still assume the majority of responsibilities for childcare and household maintenance, effectively doing at least a double shift working and caring.

Women are also generally less educated than men. Traditional attitudes in many countries often dictate that boys' livelihoods are more protected than girls, resulting in more girls than boys

missing out on a basic education (Michel 1995), a gender disparity that increases with higher education. The end result is that more men dominate higher kudos, better paid jobs.

Women too are the predominant victims of domestic violence and partner abuse. According to a World Health Organisation report in 2002, 10-69% of women reported being physically assaulted by an intimate partner (Fiji Women's Crisis Centre 2004a) and studies in the United States reveal that 30% of all females in that 'developed' country have been sexually abused as children (Pacific Women Against Violence 2004).

However excluding men from addressing these disparities has ramifications. For example, typical women-only family planning and reproductive health programmes ignore inequitable social norms underpinning the oppression of women. Pregnancy-related deaths, sexually transmitted infections, unsafe abortions, infanticide, foeticide, rape and violence are manifestations of social norms where women are second-class citizens, as one author sharply observes, "being born female is dangerous for your health" (Murphy 2003:205). Ignoring men in reproductive health programmes ignores the lack of power women have within a partnership.

Therefore it is unsurprising then that many people ask: why work with men? Why study men and their 'masculinities'? Why set up men's centres when it is women who are predominantly the victims of violence and at the receiving end of gender inequalities? With the statistics to back the real-life dominance of men inside and outside the household, and if poverty still has a female face, there remains valid question marks over whether to include men, let alone how.

### **Men as Women's Allies**

However without men, interventions addressing gender inequalities can only go so far. The practical issue of project sabotage by males who feel left out is a critical example of the limitations of the women-only development 'WID' approach. The potential for aggravation is very real among men who look on from the sidelines at women whose lives and livelihoods are being enhanced by development assistance. One example of this is a Department for International Development-funded programme in Karnataka, India in the mid 1990s to empower low caste women through small business microfinance opportunities in silk production. A candid appraisal concerning its failure, documented by Leach and Sitaram (2002), highlights the project's lack of understanding about male and female dynamics in rural communities. One major project misassumption was made at the outset that nurturing financial independence for illiterate women would be critical to changing gender relations. Hence a number of unanticipated consequences arose. These were: a heightened incidence of domestic violence as men were threatened by their wives' independence; men came under pressure from increased

workloads; and women encountered problems doing business at a market totally dominated by men. Indeed income generation opportunities for women in areas where male unemployment is high may create reactions of anger and violence against women as a means of masculine assertion (Obermeyer 1999; Pickup, Williams & Sweetman 2001; Connell 2003).

The risk of heightened violence as a result of development projects targeted towards women is also noted by UNESCO (in Chant 2000:13):

Where men have economic advantages over women, they have a privilege to defend, which may be defended with violence, or may make women vulnerable to violence. Economic changes which put at risk or destroy men's traditional livelihood without providing alternatives, makes violence or militarism attractive options.

Reproductive health and other programmes relating to people's private lives therefore carry considerable risk for individuals as bringing education, information and choices to women may antagonise men and result in hostility and aggression. Even providing basic contraception can be dangerous as many women fear animosity from their husbands, and Ehrhardt (in Pickup, Williams & Sweetman 2001:41) warns that too often we have "rushed into prevention efforts aimed at getting women to insist on condom use, but without taking into account that they may risk severe repercussions, such as violence and other serious threats to their economic and social support". As a result, many women "are only able to exercise ... choice if they conceal their decisions from their partners" (Pickup, Williams & Sweetman 2001:41). It is clear then that potentially every effort to change women's position carries the added potential of violence if violence is the "ultimate weapon available to men to ensure continuing control over resources and decision making" (Pickup, Williams & Sweetman 2001:19-20).

Another side effect of women-only projects and of sidelining men is that women often end up with heavier workloads leading to stress and exhaustion. Furthermore, targeting women and excluding men can lead to men becoming alienated from potential participation in either the project intervention or their responsibilities in family life (Chant in Chant & Gutmann 2002:275).

However these seemingly straightforward considerations have generally been ignored in development practice, yet women themselves in developing country settings recognise the dangers of being singled out for aid, and the importance of including men and fostering male allies.

### **The Call from Women: “My husband needs to hear these things”**

Rural women said they were now quite aware of women's issues, and it was time that their men were given a proper 'brain-wash' (*dimaag dhulai*) (Bhasin in Chant & Gutmann 2000:39).

Although some women, especially feminists, are ambivalent as to the value of working with men for gender equality (de Keijzer 2004:35), others at the grassroots see the possibilities of and urgency for engaging with men. Pointing to a problematic within gender feminism, Johnson-Odim (1991:315) argues that gender-informed development has been historically inappropriate within the contexts of developing countries with too much focus on women to the exclusion of men. She observes that for women in developing countries "their struggles as feminists are connected to the struggles of their communities". In Kiribati in the Pacific, Ngaebi (in van Trease 1993) also complains that one of the serious deficiencies in development strategies with women is that they do not include men. Like Johnson-Odim, Ngaebi makes a case for an integrated gender and development strategy that does not isolate women from their immediate and wider social context.

There are also many examples from the field. Harrison (in Chant 2000:12) cites a programme in Zambia where women insisted upon the involvement of men because they needed them and did not see any reason why men should not take part. In Costa Rica in 1996, workshops on rights and self-esteem for women had limited effect as women returned home to deal with "unsensitised men in their personal lives, and with patriarchal structures in both the private and public arena" (Budowski & Guzman in Chant 2000:11). Chant explains that the limitations of the project were recognised by women who asked programme coordinators to include their partners. In the experience of Mexican organisation, Salud y Género<sup>17</sup>, women constantly reminded programme staff that "we already know, please tell our husbands" in terms of the organisation's plans to work with men (de Keijzer 2004:35). And for Nicaraguan health organisation, CISAS, the decision to include men in their mandate came about after strong demands by women "that it is all very well working with women and girls to promote sexual and reproductive health and empowerment, but if you really want things to change, you have to work with men too" (Sternberg 1999:1).

So many women recognize that working with men is vital to change, and that men too often have little understanding of their position of dominance at the micro and macro levels and the

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<sup>17</sup> This translates into 'Health and Gender'.

effect that this has on women. This suggests that men are vital to gender work from planning to implementation.

### The Needs of Men

To date, consideration of men in terms of unequal power relations has occupied little space in gender programming as men have routinely been excluded from gender analyses (Chant 2000; de Keijzer 2004). And given that gender analysis is absent in the vast majority of development projects, men are arguably even more invisible than women. Although men have always been the default target population of projects “as a human category” (Chant & Gutmann 2002) and as “ungendered representatives of all humanity” (Flood 2003:27), in terms of their needs, and particularly their “life situation” men have for the most been ignored (Silberschmidt 2001:3). In its agreed conclusions at its forty-eighth session, the Commission on the Status of Women accepted that men and boys face discriminatory barriers and practices too and complaints have been made about men’s invisibility in terms of their own social issues and their relative lack of participation in development *per se*. Therefore gender analysis at the policy level has begun to take a closer look at how men are affected by government, non-governmental and donor interventions, and assessing and dealing with these barriers and practices, such as the impact of social, economic and political decisions on men, is important, albeit relatively unchartered territory.

### Male Vulnerabilities

Many of the criticisms about men’s absence from gender and development practice is due to a new focus on male vulnerabilities. The health effects of a ‘masculine’ role and lifestyle is encumbered with risks, such as road accidents, workplace injuries, sexually transmitted infections, and other lifestyle related diseases, which points to the importance of turning attention to men in their own right.<sup>18</sup>

Social expectations about what it means to be a man also render men vulnerable. Educated from an early age by mothers and fathers, boys are socialised to take risks and be aggressive, characteristics wherein “the idea of taking care of [themselves] is generally replaced by a destructive or self-destructive posture” (Medrado 2003:2). For example, Foreman (in Chant 2000:13) notes that men are currently 80% of the 6-7 million injecting drug users worldwide. In

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<sup>18</sup> Ironically more focus and research is being concentrated on men in the private sector in terms of target market advertising, than in the public sector to track how men are changing (Rapson 2004). So we can see how capitalist economic logic is not only changing gender relations but also providing the impetus for research on men.

many societies, young males are at greater risk of suicide due to mental health problems exacerbated by the male tendency to ignore health issues (Courtenay, McCreary & Merighi 2002), and the masculine imperative of 'virility' renders men at great risk of sexual diseases. In Cambodia for example, twice as many men as women are infected by HIV/AIDS "fuelled largely by unprotected heterosexual sex (Sellers et al 2002:164), and Barker (in Cleaver 2003:2) cites studies that show that in Latin America, the health burden for men is 26% higher than it is for women, exacerbated by violent measures which are regarded as an acceptable means to resolve conflict (Medrado 2003).

On top of men's specific concerns, others have been brave enough to observe that women too are capable of psychologically shaming or harming men, "putting them down, telling them that they're weak or not a man" and there are scores of men who feel the effects of "a whole consensus in our community that men are the bastards of this world" (Bunbury in Rapson 2004:40; see also Pease 2000).

These observations support persistent stereotypes identified by Chant (2000), White (1997) and Sternberg (1999) who contend that in the few circumstances men are considered, generalisations and assumptions are made about macho, patriarchal, powerful and oppositional males (Chant 2000), and bad boys (White 1997:16) who are "sexually voracious, careless and irresponsible" (Sternberg 1999:1). In this light, men who are "put in the accused chair" (Levy, Taher & Vouhé 2000:92) of "cardboard patriarchs" (Cornwall 2000:25) are too often subject to bad boy images such as public awareness campaigns and reportage on domestic violence that vilifies men as the only perpetrators of violence (Rapson 2004), or typecasts of "sex-crazed males anxious to demonstrate their fertility" (Stycos in Sternberg 1999:1).

### **Crisis of Masculinity: Men as Victims of Development**

So it can be seen that the needs of men should be progressively considered, as it is clear not all men are winners in the development process. Among the considerations are rumours of a 'crisis of masculinity' in response to massive social change brought about by changes in household structure, the economy, and development efforts attempting to improve women's position, which one Western gender expert has called "women's overempowerment" (in White 2000:35). While the term 'overempowerment' may not be conceptually sound, the notion that socio-economic change has affected men more deeply than women has been made (Silberschmidt 2001:3). Silberschmidt contents that while women's roles and identities have in some ways been strengthened, men's role and identities have been challenged and undermined, and in the process of my research, one related question that surfaced repeatedly was: is promoting

women's empowerment at the expense of men beneficial to all in the long term? (see also Cleaver 2003:8).

Adjusting to social change brought about by 'development' itself alters social relations. Chant & Gutmann (2002) note that shifts in power relations are occurring more frequently as newly 'empowered' women flood the labour and commodity markets and are increasingly able to take care of their own domestic arrangements. These changes, albeit a slow but steady shift in power relations, has influenced an emerging critique that men are also victims of development (Cornwall 2000; Sweetman 2001).

Connell (2003) argues that rapid economic change has impacted the lives of many men who have been forced to migrate to cities in search of jobs. Stephanie Linkogle (2001:118) agrees. She argues that men, as well as women, are vulnerable to the oppressive effects of the "hegemony of the market" as labour market reconfiguration leads to job loss and poverty. Jane Margold (2002:183), who studied the change in Philippino peasant men migrating to seek improved job opportunities, has described the effect of rapid social economic change on men's esteem and identities. She describes how their manhood is "partially disassembled [as] he is ghettoised, ordered to work at top speed, and quickly repatriated, often before his economic gains outweigh his feelings of shock". On observing the impacts of social change on Cuban men, David Forrest (2003:93) notes that in a reconfigured labour market that demands cheaper female labour, men are increasingly unable to "realise their patriarchal aspirations of becoming the family 'breadwinner'"... and [through the improved] public status of women through public works and formalised wage labour, the state simultaneously denied many of these men the opportunity to enact this position".

There are also concerns over boys' increasing failure at school as education opportunities are being extended to more women (Gilbert & Gilbert in Connell 2000) and the absence of male role models for boys is cited as another reason for the crisis of masculinity (Cleaver 2003:3). With increased male migration and an increase in female household heads, some boys are missing out on important male role models. In turn, disaffected youth are equated with anti-social behaviour and violence, and in sum, there seem to be fewer 'alternative' male roles models for boys in their families and communities.

Indeed development efforts targeted at women have witnessed a substantial shift in women's lives in many developing settings: they are marrying later, having fewer children, more likely to consider separation, and are more active in the formal labour sector. This social change is affecting men – their status, power, position in the family, and ultimately how they see

themselves, and there are costs to the privileges or being a son, husband and father as men are increasingly unable to meet their traditional duties and obligations such as being the breadwinner (Thomson 2003:175). These changes amount to psychological and physical stress among men, undermining their traditional male identities, intensifying their dominance and authority within the household, and exacerbating risky behaviour and psychological instability (Mehta, Peacock & Bernal 2004:95). In sum, there is also evidence that this is resulting in what Michael Kaufman (2003:15) terms a “backlash against feminism”.

### **Hegemonic Masculinities – Understanding Men and the Male Context**

In addition to concerns about the ‘bad boy’ stereotypes, there is also growing recognition that a range of ‘masculinities’ exist, intersecting with women, children and men’s subordination (Connell 2000, 2003; Kaufman 2003; de Keijzer 2004). This includes the idea that there are a number of ways of being a man, spread over class, ethnicity, age, religion, and sexual orientation, and that some forms of masculinity are culturally elevated above others (Connell 1995). The dominant model of masculinity in any given time and place has been termed ‘hegemonic masculinity’ (Connell 1995).

Insights into male sexuality, male socialisation processes and varying masculinities<sup>19</sup> in different cultural contexts helps us to understand how men are subject to inequalities within their own gender, and points to the importance of recognising the barriers to including men in gender and development efforts. Men involved in interventions encouraging greater male involvement and equality in women’s lives, for example, have reported negative reactions from other men and family members, as well as the wider community, as they try to be more supportive to their partners. Ann Blanc (2001:200) cites a study from Turkey where men were ridiculed when attempting to help with housework after their wives had just given birth. In Ghana, the Navrongo Community Health and Family Planning programme recognised the importance of garnering the support of male chiefs who play a “pivotal role in determining community opinion and action” (Bawah et al in Blanc 2001:205). And in Fiji, Dharma Chandra (2000:105) observes similar limitations of working with men, where “men who minded the children and visited family planning clinics were ‘seen as living under the control of their wives’... [as] their status and roles do not permit them to be concerned about family planning matters that were women’s responsibility and were considered unimportant”.

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<sup>19</sup> One significant critique of the emerging interest in the ‘multiples masculinities’ approach is that single-mindedly focusing on the new men and masculinity discourse as yet another form of subordination eclipses other, equally valid factors such as class, race, age and religion and economic power. Although this thesis cannot accommodate these concerns, refer to Sarah White’s (2000) observations on the complex interplay between gender and other modifiers of inequality and Hawthorne’s (2004) opinion on the relevance of all these factors which she terms ‘intersectionality’.

### **The Hazards of Including Men**

Amidst this perceived need to involve men and “rescue gender from a women’s issues ghetto” (Cleaver 2003:5), some comment that the term ‘crisis of masculinity’ is possibly “overblown … when seen against the evidence of women’s continuing economic, political and social inequality” (Chant & Gutmann 2000:16). White (2000:40) also warns that the creation of a crisis of masculinity phenomenon may in fact cloud other more oppressive regimes of “international and capitalist patterns of dominance” harkening back to the old arguments made by dependency theorists<sup>13</sup>. Therefore the subject of including men in development is a contested one and there are risks and fears of men taking over gender work and exacerbating gender inequalities. This suggests that a strong case must be made to justify a shift towards considering and including men in gender equality work.

### **Resource Stealing**

For starters, there is strong resistance against channelling funds and research into men when men are still the overwhelming recipients of ‘social’ privileges in almost every culture and at every socio-economic level. Some are afraid that men’s involvement in GAD work will siphon off already scarce resources for male research and programmes at the cost of gender justice. In terms of reproductive health, the International Planned Parenthood Federation notes that “a major concern in this issue of male involvement is whether funding for women’s reproductive and sexual health will be reduced in order to meet the reproductive needs of men” (in Chant & Gutmann 2000:19). Similarly, some women’s organisations working on gender-based violence are concerned that focusing on male perpetrators “will lead to crucial funding … being cut as the focus moves to men” (Thomson 2003:172).

However as Michael Kaufman (2004:20) points out, this fear is “partially false” if working with men meets the practical and strategic needs of women and girls. In summary, allocating some resources to men may be money spent on men, but if it is part of broader gender transformation it is also money spent to benefit women and girls.

### **Stealing Hard Won Ground**

Some resistance to focusing on boys and men is a defensive mentality among some women that they are going to lose hard-won ground (Rapson 2004) and that feminist based gains of the last twenty years may be lost (Cleaver 2003:5). There are fears that men’s involvement in gender work will result in men ‘taking over’ and even increasing their power over women. As White (2000:39) puts it, “men and masculinity may be new to GAD, but they do not constitute a virgin

field". This suggests that gender projects extending themselves to incorporate a male constituency are especially fraught with danger in political and cultural environments that struggle with egalitarian concepts of human rights and women's rights, ideas that are perceived to be "foreign or vague or... a threat to the established order, which is often favourable to men" (Obermeyer 1999:51-52). Ultimately, there is a grave fear that gender work with the new male constituency may lead to further entrenchment of patriarchal values.

### **Stealing the 'Rights' Discourse**

Another concern is that focusing on men may distract attention from women's inequalities (Cleaver 2003:5), stealing the 'women's arena' (Chant 2000:9), particularly if feminist knowledge is co-opted by men "wielding theoretical justice as a right" (Pease 2000:6). Benno de Keijzer (2004:45), co-ordinator of Mexican organisation, Salud y Género, explains that the idea of men's rights is "threatening to many women struggling for their own rights [and] this is especially true when the focus is on sexual and reproductive rights".

This is one perspective. Another view is that working with men is not taking away but adding to the equity cause, as one organisation working with men in the area of sexual and reproductive health observes:

[Including men] is not a case of creating a field of work aimed exclusively at men, but to add to the activities which have already been developed in different spheres among the female population, in order to maximise those efforts and to amplify the impact of action related to the issues of gender...<sup>20</sup>

But it is a fair concern that working on 'men's rights' questions the validity of the rights struggle when there exists reason enough for the majority of interventions to focus on those whose rights are most endangered. The notion of men 'stealing the rights discourse' thus threatens to take the emphasis away from women who are still more socially and economically disadvantaged.

### **Practical Concerns**

Questions around the inclusion of men are very much pragmatic as well as political (Cornwall & White in Chant & Gutmann 2002:277) and there are a number of practical issues involving men in gender equality work. For a start, few men, including mainstream policy makers and those at the operational level of development work, seem interested in gender (Cleaver 2003:8), and male-dominated development agencies continue to perceive men's involvement as

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<sup>20</sup> Papai Institute, Brazil, from their website <http://www.papai.org.br> (accessed September 2004)

"unnecessary" or even "counterproductive" (Drennon in Sternberg 1999:10). More women than men appear to be concerned with men, masculinities and men's roles in alleviating poverty (Smith 2001). One such example is the University of Bradford's seminar on men and gender and development in 1997 at which women wrote the majority of papers on men, masculinities and development.<sup>21</sup> This may be because women are simply more passionate about gender and relationship issues, or, as Kaufman (in Cleaver 2003:xi-xii) points out, that gender is simply invisible to men because:

The processes that confer privilege on one group and not on another group are often invisible to those upon whom that privilege is conferred... Not having to think about race is one of the luxuries of being white, just as not having to think about gender is one of the patriarchal dividends of gender inequality.<sup>22</sup>

Pearson (2000b:47) makes the point that in terms of working with men, the motivations of men in developing countries may be quite different from those of Western countries. Men involved in Southern gender initiatives are often operating in contexts of poverty, disaster, conflict and displacement. Meanwhile, Northern men are inspired by new discourses of masculinity and the currently fashionable 'men' in gender and development practice, for which funding is at an all-time high. This may result in externally funded male-GAD projects being executed in a rather different manner from what the donor intended, and project outcomes may look vastly different from their transformatory objectives. In response to this challenge, it has been suggested that highlighting shared struggles between men and women is more likely to prompt men to change in ways that will benefit women and men (White 1997:21) such as focusing on parenting. This theme is revisited in the next chapter.

Related to this concern is the deficit of experienced and appropriate practitioners working in and on gender with men at an implementation level. While the majority of practitioners and trainers working within the field are women, men may be more likely to listen to other men about gender (Lang 2002:17), and in some contexts the facilitation of gender issues by a male may definitely be more important than others (Levy, Taher & Vouhé 2000). Therefore addressing the viability of gender projects executed for, and with, men by women is a key consideration, particularly in patriarchal cultures where women are not afforded the same respect as men. So there are some limitations of women working with men in the gender field particularly as many

<sup>21</sup> Refer seminar website <http://www.brad.ac.uk/acad/dppc/gender/mandmweb/contents.html> (accessed May 2004)

<sup>22</sup> Greig, Kimmel and Lang (2000:7) flesh out this issue of the 'naturalisation' of male power of which the by-product is the invisibility of male gender in the acquisition of power. They argue that this point is "one of the main functions performed by discourses of masculinity", born out of the debates within feminist scholarship on the connections between men, gender and power.

men have difficulties opening up, and this is when a good facilitator is paramount (Idogho in Lang 2002:18). As such it is proposed that not only more men are required in gender work (Keating 2004; Bhasin 1997; Smith 2001) but also good quality practitioners (Sellers et al 2002).<sup>23</sup>

The lack of women at senior management level in development organisations also risks confining many projects to the women-only WID sphere, an approach that is perceived as less threatening to male power (Ruxton 2004:225). Furthermore, with gender disinterested development executives, men's interests run the risk of being prioritised and maintained over and above women's, and senior male managers may be an obstruction to more junior, gender-sympathetic male staff (Ruxton 2004:225).

Although there *are* men who are committed to, and living, gender equitable ways, another hindrance is the lack of male leaders and "flagship men" who can have important influences on other men in developing country settings and work within men and boys in these communities to bring about gender change (Smiley 2004). Encouraging and building a critical mass of men to promote gender equality is therefore a significant challenge facing governments, agencies and organisations within the development sector (Ruxton 2004:207).

Lastly, the crisis of masculinity, and the globalisation of feminism fuels further dangers, such as a strengthening backlash against women's development or 'empowerment', religious fundamentalisms (Smiles 2004), and the "displacement of the crisis into ethnic hatred or war mongering" (Kaufman 2003:15). Projects involving men may also risk the manipulation of power by some men, "creating a vicious cycle of violence against women" (Lang 2002:28).

### ***Conclusion***

The focus on men and masculinities reflects a general conceptual shift within the development sector; from analysing women's subordinate position not in isolation from, but in relation to, men in the private and public spheres. In this Chapter I argued that there are two primary reasons for focusing on men. One is that gender interventions can only go so far without men, if 'men are the problem'. This is because support for women's advancement is only possible with positive sanctioning from men. But there is also evidence that women may be the victims of

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<sup>23</sup> In reviewing their work with men in Cambodia on HIV/AIDS prevention, Sellers et al (2002:162) make the point that one fundamental aspect in working with men is "the importance of training and mutual support for male group facilitators to help them understand their own sexuality and come to terms with their own attitudes towards gender, violence, and so on."

their own empowerment as men's fears and insecurities emerge out of their real and perceived loss of power and resources. Second, men are increasingly in need of special attention as a gendered category in their own right as they have needs too. Changes within the labour market are especially pre-empting changes within the household and it can be seen that men are also victims of the development process.

There are practical concerns relating to implementation too. If the active participation of men is critical to women's empowerment, yet there remains a dearth of gender-sensitive men to facilitate and engender enough interest among males, we are caught in a catch twenty-two.

Still, on an optimistic note, the challenges for gender and development reviewed in this chapter are also opportunities to make a difference. The issues discussed add weight to the importance of addressing and involving men and boys as they search for answers to many of the problems confronting them. Their inclusion may also ensure GAD is salvaged from persistently being all about women and "oppressive heterosexual relations" (Cornwall 2000:25), leading to truly participatory development interventions for positive gender change. Or, it could even be presented more simply, as a Kenyan gender practitioner noted, that men are needed because "there are [just] too many problems, [so] we need to bring the men in so they do more" (White 2000:40). Therefore as hard as it may be to challenge gender relations "failure to broach substantive tactical issues in respect of male involvement" (White 2000:41) risks the continuation of leaving women to hold the gender baby. Men therefore cannot be ignored.

Having reviewed the academic arguments, the support and benefits for, opposition to, and some of the theoretical and practical difficulties involving men and boys in gender and development work, Chapter Three identifies a number of entry points and tools for working with men in the pursuit of gender justice.

## CHAPTER 3 The Practice: How to Work with Men

The agenda of engaging men is not novel because of whom it addresses, but how (Flood 2004:27)

### ***Introduction***

Despite the persuasive theoretical and practical reasons and the mainstream rhetoric calling for the inclusion of men in gender equality work, Sylvia Chant (2000:8-9) argues that few concrete guidelines exist in terms of where, when and how to include men in gender planning, either at the institutional or grassroots levels. While this may be true, particularly because authentic gender and development practice itself is so novel, recent pioneering efforts with men indicate that there are some sound guidelines on how best to work with them, and a number of important entry points and a basic methodology have been identified that possess the broad cross-cultural potential to achieve gender equitable outcomes.

This first part of this chapter reviews these entry points and looks at some recent initiatives whose evaluations to date indicate that they have had some success in reaching men and boys by way of challenging gender norms and gender socialisation patterns. The second half of the chapter pulls out some of the key lessons learnt as a toolkit for addressing men in GAD work. This toolkit will be the benchmark for assessing my case studies.

### ***Entry Points***

The most progressive and successful interventions working with men are those that challenge gender norms, questioning men's views of themselves and stimulating their interest in gender equality in different ways. 'Gender norms' refers to the bundle of social expectations that determine male and female behaviour and their roles and the relative social value assigned to males and females (White, Greene & Murphy 2003). Gender norms are arguably the most compelling of social influences shaping women's and men's lives, providing "the values that justify different and often discriminatory treatment of one or the other gender" (White, Greene & Murphy 2003:3). Gender norms are learned from families, friends, opinion leaders, religious and cultural institutions, schools and the media. They determine the status, economic and political power and roles which women and men are granted in society (de Bruyn 1995). In many cultures, gender norms are detrimental to both women and men's health, impeding the realisation of the equitable distribution resources and rights (UNAIDS 1999). Although most interventions inevitably alter gender norms in an effort to change the behaviour of project recipients, say for example, encouraging men to use condoms, if not executed in a gender-

sensitive fashion, these interventions may exacerbate rather than alleviate existing inequalities, having “haphazard or unintended effects on gender norms” (White, Greene & Murphy 2003:2).

Challenging people’s perceptions of their gender norms and values concerning their roles in the family and community is therefore an essential approach for interventions that aim to achieve gender equality. This includes looking at different, alternative ways of being a man, and promoting male responsibility as partners and allies of women in the spheres of fathering, sexual and reproductive health, and violence, all of which are closely connected with gender norms.

### Fatherhood

Rearing and nurturing children is a demanding job for women of all cultures and despite being unpaid and universally undervalued, women are the primary service providers in the home. When men do help they often regard this assistance as providing support rather than an intrinsic part of their parenting role as father (Sternberg 1999)<sup>24</sup>. And while hands-on parenting and communication with children may be of more interest to and concern women more, men still generally dictate major and minor family decisions, and their communication with children is commonly limited to advice and discipline.

Encouraging greater participation in family life carries a number of positive outcomes for men and their families. Working with men in terms of their role as fathers encourages men to start thinking about issues such as the division of labour in the household, as well as other topics such as “authority, negotiation... discipline and violence, emotions, and reproduction” (de Keijzer 2004:42). Fostering greater partnership among spouses encourages men to become more involved in cooking, cleaning and shopping, helping relieve the workload of their partners, and cultivating greater family communication and community engagement as men become more active in their reproductive role.

At a more strategic level, working with men in their role as fathers has benefits. Firstly, having been exposed to gender concerns at the project level, men may be in a better position to identify and witness gender discrimination of women and girls they know, and this may be one of the strongest factors in encouraging men to “internalise commitment to gender equality” (Rogers

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<sup>24</sup> In many settings men are already quite involved in care and domestic work. However, unlike the plethora of research on women’s reproductive roles there is a dearth of documentation and research into this aspect of men’s lives (Expert Group 2003).

2004:182). Secondly, working with men in their role as fathers helps 'reach' boys at a point of male socialisation by offering new ways of being a man, a brother, a father, a son, and so on.

In her review of Oxfam GB's work in Bangladesh and India with men, Sharon Rogers (2004:183-184) cites some examples of where gender-sensitised men point to their own parenting experiences as a source of inspiration to challenge patriarchal practices:

For me, now that I have a daughter, who is my only child, I see everything through her eyes. For example, when I see an eight-year-old girl teased, I now think "I want a different future for my daughter. My daughter will one day go to someone else's house. How will she be treated there? How can I prepare her?"

I have only one child, my daughter, and we have given [her] the kind of freedom that... would only be given to a boy... Despite criticism [from our neighbours], we've withstood the pressure to control her. Now, the neighbours praise us when our daughter does things that typical girls can't do... I am really proud to see [other] girls... looking to her as a model... [and] their parents [now] talk to us and ask advice.

These examples indicate that men, as fathers, can be prompted to consider wider societal mechanisms of discrimination, and because they impact them intimately, they begin questioning gender inequitable laws and cultural practices which may not have otherwise concerned them (Rogers 2004). This includes thinking about discrimination in health, nutrition, and education, and the "institutionalised legal disadvantages... that keep land, money, and other economic resources out of women's hands, and by foreclosing protection and redress, [how] they contribute to violence against women" (White, Greene & Murphy 2003:3).

Working with men in their paternal capacity also assists in shaping more gender-sensitive sons. Nurturing boys into gender-sensitive adults is dependent to a great degree on the nature of the father-son relationship (Adriao et al 2002:204). For example, a patriarchal, distant father is likely to perpetuate and exacerbate misogynist values and violence (Pease 2000). Christian (in Pease 2000:58) argues that hegemonic forms of masculinity, particularly those expounding male authority and power, are in part produced by identification of sons with traditional fathers. In turn, the relationship between fathers and sons reproduces a culture's sexual and political values. Fathers who exude an attitude of superiority towards their wives will influence children to take their 'gendered cues'. As Pease (2000:71) points out, a boy may learn that "if he wants to be accepted into male society, he has to turn his back on his mother", and girls are similarly socialised into their 'role', albeit one of subservience. Consequently if men are given an opportunity to demonstrate their capacity to care and communicate, this will have benefits for both boys and girls. Doing gender work with men as fathers therefore possesses the potential to

mould boys and young men to thinking and living in a more nurturing, gender equitable way (Greig Kimmel & Lang 2000; Ruxton 2001; Brown 2004).<sup>25</sup>

Recent fatherhood education programmes show how “fatherwork” (Brown 2004) is an excellent entry point for gender work with men and holds significant potential for alleviating women’s oppression and enhancing more gender equitable socialisation. In Jamaica, a programme called Fathers Incorporated engages with men to encourage positive images of fathering and greater community and family engagement. An evaluation of the programme found that out of 700 new fathers, 50% reported more involvement in family life (Greig, Kimmel & Lang:8). In Brazil, the PAPAI Institute’s work with younger fathers and adolescents has shown that nurturing and caretaking is “perfectly compatible with being a man” (de Keijzer 2004:42), and de Keijzer observes that this sort of new mindset has led to other positive outcomes, such as challenging the male imperative to take risks and be aggressive.

One concern worth mentioning is the potential resistance from some women towards men’s greater parental involvement. Being the most significant child carer is sometimes the one and only area where women can exert power and control in their lives and relationships and may feel too vulnerable if they perceive they might need to give part of this away (de Keijzer 2004). The challenge therefore is to work with not only men in their parenting roles, but also women in helping them appreciate that if they do want more economic and social opportunities, then a ‘reproductive power’ compromise may be necessary (Ruxton 2001).

### **Sexual and Reproductive Health**

I think family planning clinics have created an important space for women in which they have autonomy and information and education, which they may be lacking in other areas of their lives ... Unfortunately, we’ve ignored the context in which they live. We haven’t thought about what happens when they leave the clinic, return home, and men are still the primary decision-makers no matter what (Eliza Mahoney in Chant & Gutmann 2000:31)

Through their work with men on HIV/AIDS prevention in Cambodia, Tilly Sellers and her colleagues (2002:163) of the organisation Khana observe the importance of programmes to consider what happens to women when they return home as Eliza Mahoney points out above.

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<sup>25</sup> It must be remembered that while working with men in their parental capacity holds great potential for ‘re-gendering’ boys, both mothers and fathers sculpt boys’ attitudes. In his work with Mexican men, de Keijzer (2004:31) notes that men are well aware of women “raising the new generation of machos”. This points to the complexity of gender socialisation and it should not be forgotten that teachers, sisters, grandmothers and aunts also contribute to the shaping of children’s gender identities and upholding patriarchal values (see also Kandiyoti 1997).

The women Khana work with report that it is “significantly easier to negotiate sex or condom use with husbands who had ‘also studied’”. ‘Also studied’ refers to husbands who participate in sexual and reproductive health education programmes.

At the International Conference on Population and Development over a decade ago in 1994 it was recognised that among the multiple forms of discrimination facing women, decision-making in the reproductive sphere is one area where men exert preponderant power “ranging from personal decisions regarding the size of families to the policy and programme decisions taken at all levels of Government” (ICPD 1995). This preponderant power perpetuates a cycle of poverty through high rates of unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, malnutrition, infant mortality, and gender violence.

Consequently, reproductive health programmes are increasingly taking into consideration the social dynamics of gender and power in women and men’s lives, and not just the biological aspects of sex and reproduction. In practice this means not just focusing on the woman who gives birth, breastfeeds and does the majority of nurturing, but also her partner who engages himself in reproductive decision-making and behaviour right from the outset of sex and conception.

Often this engagement in reproductive decision-making and behaviour starts early. In many cultural settings, male youth desire and/or feel obliged to have sex with girls to prove their maleness. These sexual encounters generally don’t involve contraception, often because of time pressures, but also because men don’t want to appear insecure or that they have an infection, and so working with young men is critical as teenage attitudes towards sex and gender feed into subsequent adult relationships and have wide-ranging consequences, often more severely impacting the female.

Encouraging male involvement in sexual and reproduction health programmes is not only important in terms of educating men and youth about sexual risk-taking, infections and birth control, but also in terms of promoting gender equitable attitudes from an early age given that masculinity and power is central to the process of procreation and reproduction. Ann Blanc (2001) gives a compelling account of the efficacy of addressing power in sexual and reproductive health programmes. She argues that without power, an individual is unable to make choices, and in the context of sexual relationships, this may lead to negative reproductive health outcomes, such as unwanted pregnancies, STDs, unsafe abortions, and violence, not to mention the denial of sexual pleasure. Therefore a programme endeavouring to improve gender

relations cannot afford to ignore power issues, as much as it can't ignore cultural assumptions about sex, gender and power.<sup>26</sup>

Failure to do so has been shown to have dire consequences. Benno de Keijzer (2004:42) warns that campaigns working with men that contribute to negative gains for women should be eliminated. He observes that although some:

... controversial initiatives are successful in reaching men, [they] lack a gender perspective that sensitises men and empowers women. Slogans directed at men, as in the Zimbabwe campaign ('You are in control'), or in Mexico ('Are you really so macho? So plan your family') openly reinforce patriarchy. If a campaign like this contributes to a backlash for women, it is better to eliminate such strategies.

The evaluation of a campaign in the Middle East also indicated that including men resulted in less choice for women as men's power over women's fertility increased (Cornwall in Sternberg & Hubley 2004). Another programme encouraging vasectomy faltered as it was premised on promoting the procedure as "an extension of male authority" and was subsequently re-designed after staff decided that it "perpetuated a situation of 'excessive male control'" (Bongarts & Bruce in Blanc 2001:202). The danger is that many family planning strategies involving men often "assume a degree of equality of power in relationships that frequently does not exist" (Pickup, Williams and Sweetman 2001:42).

Clearly working with men in the area of sex and reproduction is especially challenging. Openly discussing sex and reproduction is taboo in many societies, where, regardless of people's actual behaviour, there remains a social veto on public discussion of the topic. And in order to change established patterns of power, control and behaviour, alternative notions of being a man (and indeed a woman), or 'gender norms', must be explored with men and women - notions that are marginalized in many societies.

Yet despite the challenges, some promising initiatives in the sexual and reproductive health field indicate that focusing on gender can encourage both men (and women) to examine and broaden pre-existing notions of what gender means to help tackle those aspects of traditional gender relations that put men, their partners and children at risk. New York-based organisation, EngenderHealth, has worked with men since 1996. Feedback from their 'Men as Partners'

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<sup>26</sup> Understanding power relations, not only between genders but also within genders is important too, for there are multiple ways of being a man and many men are subject to subordination within their own gender. This subordination in turn may exacerbate the inequalities between genders (Greig, Kimmel & Lang 2000).

interventions in Pakistan, Nepal, Bolivia and South Africa suggest that their work is effective when the identities and needs of men are considered as well as the cultural and gender issues in the country (Mehta, Peacock & Bernal 2004). Like the examples discussed by Sharon Rogers (2004) in 'Fatherhood' above, EngenderHealth's observations from their experiences with men in reproductive health is that counter to widespread assumptions that men are reluctant to participate in such programmes, men are often eager to challenge traditional norms, customs and practices especially in light of those which put their own, their wives and their children's health at risk (Mehta, Peacock & Bernal 2004). EngenderHealth's South African 'Men as Partners' programme encouraged men to critically appraise how current gender roles negatively affect them and their partners. This was achieved by story telling and role-plays held in the context of South Africa's situation of apartheid, unemployment and poverty. This strategy used local contexts, ideas and language to convey the impact that many norms have on gender relations and health, altering norms, and not just behaviours, to successfully improve the sexual health of male and female project recipients (White, Greene & Murphy 2003).

One of the single biggest lessons learnt from EngenderHealth's experiences in the field is that their work must incorporate a gender perspective in order to be successful. Failing that, interventions that do not consider women's needs run the risk of reinforcing gender stereotypes, and it is critical for programmes to acknowledge power imbalances between genders and encourage men to work towards more equitable relationships. This can be achieved by forming alliances and building relationships with other progressive social movements.

The importance of challenging gender norms in work with men in sexual and reproductive health was also pertinent for Nicaraguan organisation CISAS<sup>27</sup>. In 1996, CISAS began working with men as a result of demands by their female constituency. Peter Sternberg's (1999:4) evaluation of their work showed that the key to successfully working with Nicaraguan men was to help them understand themselves and the way *machismo* operates in their lives, particularly in the milieu of the family. This then "might provide men with reasons to participate in actions aimed at altering the oppressive structures which maintain women's subordination and exploitation". Although Sternberg found that men are often proud of their stereotypical image of "sexually voracious conquerors of women and ... [being] real men", he contests that altering oppressive structures by policing the artificial and 'man-made' gender norms of masculinity in

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<sup>27</sup> CISAS stands for Centro de Información y Servicios de Asesoria en Salud.

the family is highly effective through gender-sensitive sexual and reproductive health work (Sternberg 1999:10).

Questioning gender with younger people has also proven to be effective in terms of reducing risky sexual behaviour and infusing young men with gender-equitable ideas. A UNFPA-supported project in the Arab States with Boy Scouts was successful in providing training in interpersonal and counselling skills and sensitivity to gender and culture in the context of pregnancy and STD prevention (Blanc 2001:203). In South Africa, the Inkunzi Project worked with 200 boys and young men on culture, masculinity, femininity, and gender violence, as well as HIV and prevention (Le Grange 2004). In the project's work with peer educators, Le Grange (2004:110) notes that they "showed a growing awareness of women's rights" which is critical in the cultural framework of South Africa where "violence against women ... is deeply rooted and socially acceptable" (Le Grange 2004:105).

Reproductive health interventions that take an integrated approach to working with men in terms of addressing violence is also key to ensuring positive outcomes for women and men and reducing the incidence of gender-based violence. This is because violence is "perhaps the most compelling manifestation of unequal power in sexual relationships ... [with] a multitude of negative effects on women's sexual and reproduction health" (Blanc 2001:195). Programmes must address the issue of gender power, and although there are relatively few reports of reproductive health interventions that have involved men in violence reduction (Sternberg & Hubley 2004), the few that have confronted the difficult topic of violence and examined the role of gender power in sexual relationships with men point to some success in bringing about positive sexual and reproductive health outcomes for both women and men.

### Violence

The more I work on violence against women, the more I become convinced that the real way forward is to redefine what it means to be a male (Heise in Greig, Kimmel & Lang 2000:5).

Anti-violence programmes working with men are arguably the most progressive interventions in terms of addressing gender norms, gender relations and power dynamics. Many of these programmes work with men to enable them to identify how powerful structural and cultural

pressures and messages and parenting have all contributed to their socialisation as men and their attitudes about violence (Greig, Kimmel & Lang 2000:12).<sup>28</sup>

One of the most recognised interventions is the White Ribbon Campaign. Initiated in Canada in 1991, it has been implemented by numerous women's and human rights organisations and has evolved into a global annual effort to highlight gender violence. White ribbons have become the international symbol of 'men against violence against women' and men, and women, are encouraged to wear the ribbons for a week to highlight the campaign and personally reflect on the issues of gender violence. The campaign commences on November 25 making the International Day for the Eradication of Violence Against Women.

Other smaller 'men against violence' interventions are happening in remote places. In Timor Leste where domestic violence is ubiquitous<sup>29</sup>, the Men's Association of Violence (AMKV) was formed in 2002 and initially conducted training with 38 men on gender, violence and masculinity (de Araujo 2004). Working in collaboration with women's groups in Timor Leste, the AMKV concentrate their efforts in the community and schools, conducting workshops on gender violence. There they cover traditions and customs that influence people's ideas about gender roles through a framework of human rights by pointing out "that domestic violence is a violation of human rights" (de Araujo 2004:145).

Often 'men against violence' projects are run by women's organisations, such as women's crisis centres set up to support women who are victims of violence. In Fiji, where like Timor Leste, violence is endemic, the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre ran its first "Men's Program Against Violence Against Women" in 2002 which involved a two-week workshop with men on gender awareness, the dynamics of gender violence, and men's attitudes towards themselves and women. Confronting beliefs about what it is to be a man is one of the key components of the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre's work with men and those who participate are expected to deconstruct their ideas about 'masculinity' and 'femininity'. The Fiji Women's Crisis Centre regularly conducts workshops for the military and police on gender issues, violence against women, and human rights.

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<sup>28</sup> UNESCAP documents some 60 programmes worldwide run by civil society organisations working in partnership with men to end violence against women. Sourced January 2005 from [www.unescap.org/esid/GAD/Resources/NewTableEVAWM.pdf](http://www.unescap.org/esid/GAD/Resources/NewTableEVAWM.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> A 2003 study reported that 43% of women experienced physical violence by their partner in the last year (De Araujo 2004:140).

The above examples show that there is vast social and personal therapeutic value to working with men in ways that do not skirt around the important issue of men's personal and public role in women's subordination. The projects discussed above, which are only a handful of examples, indicate the enormous potential that GAD interventions possess in terms of encouraging more gender equitable behaviour. They suggest that it is only by challenging gender norms through addressing the socialisation of men and women can they be effective.

### ***Toolkit for Working with Men***

This section looks at a recently devised strategy for working with men which brings under one roof many of the lessons learnt and best practices from the pioneering interventions involving men to date. It outlines the tools I use to evaluate the case studies.

Here I combine and adapt two related approaches that incorporate fundamental GAD principles: the ideas of Caroline Moser's (1989) practical and strategic gender needs; and Michael Kaufman's (2003) AIM Framework<sup>30</sup>. The rationale behind combining the ideas of Moser and Kaufman is two-fold. Moser's 'practical and strategic gender needs' alone do not address the issue of men's role in achieving gender equality. During the period that Moser identified this 'needs' approach, few initiatives included men in terms of women's development. Yet Moser's framework is important because it guides gender planning and projects in the interests of women who are socially and culturally oppressed. Meanwhile the more recent strategies of Kaufman are specifically designed to guide the development of a steadily increasing number of gender-focused interventions involving men and boys. They are closely aligned with Moser's strategic gender interests as they aim to "mobilise men and boys to work on their own and in partnership with women and girls to transform destructive masculinities, end oppressive gender relations, and promote gender equality" (Kaufman 2003:16).

### **Practical and Strategic Gender Needs**

In the first part of Chapter Two about women in development, reference was made to Caroline Moser's (1989) 'practical and strategic' gender needs. Her typology groups gender programming in to two tiers. 'Practical' interventions address the concrete needs or 'practical gender needs' of women and girls in their traditional reproductive capacity as mothers and

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<sup>30</sup> AIM is the acronym for 'Addressing and Involving Men and Boys To Promote Gender Equality and End Gender Discrimination and Violence'. The AIM Framework was initially described in a paper for UNICEF as a practical development model for "analysis and action" of men and gender projects (Kaufman 2004:19).

housewives, and subsistence and community workers. Practical projects, for instance, welfare and anti-poverty interventions, focus on the basics such as providing access to safe drinking water, maternal and child health, or income-generation activities such as sewing and craftwork. Typically they do not include men in planning or implementation and are politically and culturally safe by preserving the traditionally accepted sexual divisions of labour (Moser 1989:1809).

On the other hand, 'strategic' gender interventions are those that attempt to challenge gender norms, such as the conventional gender division of labour, structural gender inequalities and cultural stereotypes that oppress women. They demand redistribution of power and resources to equally benefit both sexes and necessitate socio-structural change and commitment from women and men in both the private and public spheres. Strategic gender projects may attempt to gain full reproductive rights for women, improve their family situation such as lightening domestic tasks and abolishing domestic violence, strengthen legal and financial rights, revise inheritance and land laws, and fight for women's representation at critical decision-making levels (Molyneux in Moser 1989:1803).

The very act of bringing men into projects that directly impact women's lives makes some practical initiatives 'strategic'. Moser (1989:1816) draws on a number of examples where practical projects for women can be a means through which strategic gender needs are met, essentially a 'combination' of the two approaches, for instance tapestry classes for women in the Philippines where women's rights are discussed. For this thesis, this idea of a combination approach is taken further. For example, projects addressing men in their parenting capacity are a means to meet strategic gender needs as men are encouraged to step outside their 'masculine' roles to assist with childbearing, raising children, domestic duties, and the health and nutritional needs of their children. Likewise working with men to end gender violence meets the strategic needs of women. The cessation of violence creates a more democratic atmosphere, alleviates physical and mental stress and can improve the health and well being of a woman and her children, ensuring that work tasks critical to the survival of the family are not affected by the impact of abuse. A sexual and reproductive health project encouraging more equitable decision making in family planning and contraceptive use may eventually result in more freedom and independence for women, and men. And it can be seen that although these projects might be money spent directly on men, they are, as Michael Kaufman (2003:1) points out, also "part of a process of gender transformation to the benefit of women and girls", and by nature are strategic.

### AIM Framework

Here, the ideas of Moser meet with those of Kaufman. Kaufman's (2003) AIM Framework recognises the role that men play in addressing inequalities, and it speaks to the "potential positive outcomes of addressing and involving men and boys to challenge our gender order" (Kaufman 2003:4).

Michael Kaufman's AIM Framework is a functional gender and development assistance model specifically designed to guide the development of a steadily increasing number of gender-based interventions mobilising "men and boys to work on their own and in partnership with women and girls to transform destructive masculinities, end oppressive gender relations, and promote gender equality" (Kaufman 2003:16). For Kaufman, there is urgency for men to be involved in gender justice, because women's issues are never just 'women's issues', they are 'men's issues' too, for example, violence against women and relative absenteeism of men in childcare and domestic work (Kaufman 2003:16). Kaufman asserts that unless men change and are directly involved in gender and development work, then achieving gender justice will be impossible.

Because of the complexity of patriarchy at every level of society, Kaufman states that there is "no magic program" in working with men to end gender discrimination (2003:25), but there are some basic guiding principles. These principles, which are aligned with Moser's strategic needs, are based on GAD methodology of analysing gender in terms of relationships between men and women and challenging gender norms in the existing institutions of gender power that are biased towards men.

But Kaufman's ideas go further. They recognise the potential difficulties in bringing men in to gender work. His AIM Framework talks to the reality of men's fears in a changing social order that entails men, individually and collectively, relinquishing some power and control, just like the failed 'equity' approach identified in Chapter Two. It recognises that the character formation of men is often closely connected with domination, authority, power and control, and unless this ground is carefully and gender-sensitively covered, then the inherent dangers of bringing men in to the scene threaten to emerge.

For Kaufman, working with men in terms of the 'private' institution of the family is perhaps the single most effective approach to achieve gender justice. This is because the family is where gender identities are introduced to children and perpetuated by mothers and fathers. Engaging with men in their roles as husband and father is therefore paramount, as is shaking the common belief that gender roles are based on the biological differences between men and women and are

immutable. Instead, an acceptance that gender is ‘man-made’, or socially constructed, must be promoted, where ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’ has less to do with anatomical differences and constraints and more to do with socially and culturally defined behaviour and roles.

Male-targeted interventions must discuss and encourage men to challenge their power and privileges, but in ways that do not alienate or blame, or pigeon-hole men as perpetrators, instead allowing them to recognise that they have important responsibilities and the power to change (Kaufman 2003). Kaufman describes this in terms of ‘neutralizing men’s fears’, of which creating and nurturing a new language of emotion among pro-equality groups of men, rather than “old boys’ networks” is essential (Kaufman 2003:20).

The remainder of this chapter brings together some key tools identified by Kaufman to assist specific gender-based initiatives involving men and boys, and combined with the ideas of Moser’s ‘practical and strategic gender needs’ approach, forms a guide with which to evaluate my primary and secondary case studies, that is, Men as Partners and the Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre.

### **Addressing Gender Identities and Norms**

Encouraging men to reflect on their masculine identities, behaviour and other social practices, especially pertaining to violence and family relations, is essential to the success of gender-based interventions with men. Kaufman argues that the “equation of masculinity with power is one internalised by boys into their developing personalities” (2003:11). When asking men to reflect on masculinity and gender norms, it is important that men feel positive about themselves as men, or as fathers, or as husbands. Simply beginning with a ‘deficit model’ (Lang 2002:17) risks alienating men and immediately putting them on the defensive (Kaufman 2003). For example, it is unhelpful to talk of men as “simply a perpetrator of violence against women... but also a perpetrator of love and responsibility” (Kaufman 2003:22). Concentrating on men as supportive partners of women, rather than masters of women, for example, including addressing their respective social positions, strategically educates men about the ways in which they control the family, the family’s resources, or acts of violence. Using language, ideas and imagery about men that leaves them feeling blamed for the collective not individual actions, or for behaviour they were socialised into, will simply “alienate most boys and men” (Kaufman 2003:18).

If men’s sense of self-esteem is closely related to their role of breadwinner, especially for those living in communities undergoing rapid economic change, it is critical that the broader issues of unemployment and poverty be addressed, as well as gender identities, to assist men in

understanding the links between poverty and unemployment and their identities as males. The importance of addressing the wider social context is highlighted by EngenderHealth who believe that examining the relationships between social problems and male identities help “men to examine how poverty and unemployment have affected their own perceptions of being men, and how these may lead to practices that can put both them and their partners at risk” (Mehta, Peacock & Bernal 2004:95).

### **Creating and Nurturing Groups of Pro-Equality Men**

In Chapter Two it was made clear that there are difficulties of bringing men into gender equality work in terms of the social barriers men face when attempting to lead more gender equitable lives. Kaufman’s framework recognises this challenge and argues for interventions to take a broad social action approach that give men strength.

Creating the space for dialogue and informal networks and ties of intimacy with other men in a pro-equality manner enables men to face the inevitable images and demands of manhood in the wider community. Part of the process is encouraging a language of emotion among these groups of men, and by doing so replacing the “old boys’ networks” (Kaufman 2003:20). The individuals in these groups can act as gender-equitable role models for men and boys in the community, exemplifying different models of male behaviour.

Sourcing and promoting individual and group role models is an important component of male-focused interventions. The Brazilian organisation, Instituto Promundo, went as far as doing research to source young men who were more “gender-equitable than prevailing norms in the communities” and employed these men as peer trainers to help implement their work (Lang 2002:18). Kaufman also calls for the involvement of boys and men in not only implementing, but also helping design and focus more effective project messages. In helping design project methodology, the coordinators of the Stepping Stones project sourced men from the communities to work closely in project design, as well as collecting data from within the communities (Lang 2002:18). This ensured that culturally sensitive ways of bringing men into gender work were found.

### **Addressing Power Relations**

Kaufman suggests that programmes, at the very least, begin with analysing the “primacy of men’s power and privilege” (2003:16). Kaufman claims that this is less for ideological reasons than alerting men to the systemic nature of patriarchy that teaches and nurtures men to exercise individual and institutionalised power. In doing so, men may then be able to see how this power

and privilege translates to their everyday lives in terms of their personal relationships with women, to the laws that perpetuate unequal gender norms and relations. Kaufman asserts that it is “only by challenging their power and privileges will [men] (and the world) be able to move forward” (2003:17).

### **No Violence**

In Kaufman’s framework it is imperative that gender interventions with men possess a zero-tolerance towards violence. This means that the principles of the project, its content and execution, for example the project staff, must promote non-violence. If not, violence will continue as long as “some men encourage displays of violence and so long as other men do not challenge these versions of manhood or challenge the individual or social acts of violence, or [even] ... society’s permission of violence” (Kaufman 2003:19).

### **Working within a Women’s Rights Framework and Taking a Feminist Focus**

Kaufman’s framework makes no apologies about the need to challenge men to support the human rights of women and girls (Kaufman 2003:20). In order to do so there must be an analysis of “sex/gender”, that is, the “critical (but sometimes overlooked) distinction between biological sex and socially-created gender” (Kaufman 2003:6). This enables men to appreciate that gender is not a stack of watertight boxes, as Connell (2000) reminds us, but is a process and a relationship (Kaufman 2003:7).

### **Conclusion**

The case studies reviewed in this chapter provide some key pointers for ‘best practice’ in gender and development interventions involving men. Rather than viewing men as the ‘problem’, these projects include more nuanced considerations of the dynamics of gender. This way they have opened the space for including men as partners and allies with women in achieving gender equality, justifying the dismissal of the women-only ‘WID’ development approach, and presenting to men, and women, the opportunity to work towards a shared struggle for equity and justice. It is also clear that both donors and project implementers must be committed to the principles of gender equality within a women and human rights framework. Failing this, projects will not achieve the goals of gender empowerment and social justice.

The next chapter turns to the country setting in which the programmes were studied to apply some historical and social context around both the interventions. This Chapter sets the cultural

scene and enables an informed and relevant review of the programmes in the final four Chapters.

## CHAPTER 4 The Setting: Development and Gender in Fiji

Men in all the cultures in Fiji are the decision makers in homes, churches, and society at large ... Men hold prominent roles in deciding what should be done, what's right and wrong, what's acceptable and unacceptable... Men are the gatekeepers in almost everything in Fijian communities (male respondent in Plange 2000:41)

### *Introduction*

The quote above indicates that men in Fiji wield preponderant power in every sphere of life as the gatekeepers of "almost everything". This observation points to the relevance of, and justification for, bringing men in to gender equality efforts in the Fiji islands because improving women's social position is limited without their support and participation, rendering women-only efforts inadequate. But it also suggests that there is ample opportunity to build on men's growing concern with gender change, so long as the effectiveness of policies designed to improve the lives of women and girls are not compromised or weakened.

Bringing men on board goes beyond the Fiji government's decade-long commitment to promoting gender equality through endorsing women's rights conventions, mainstreaming gender at the policy level, and supporting projects addressing women's subordination. Because while these exist in the islands, the process of change in terms of women and men's roles has been slow, resisted, and an 'uphill battle' when set against political disorder and religious fervour. Or, as one of my respondents observed, a majority of Fijian men and women simply believe that they are not ready for programmes addressing equality or women's rights - that it is too soon for feminism. But, she asked, "when will we ever be ready?"

The bulk of gender-based projects in Fiji currently run along 'WID' lines – they address women but avoid men. Therefore incorporating men into development projects, in a gender equitable way, can assist individuals and communities in the readiness for change and ensure that the multiple gender policies implemented by government move from 'tokenism' to results.<sup>31</sup>

Examining the social, economic and cultural situation in Fiji provides the context and tools with which to analyse the case studies under discussion, that together play a part in influencing gender relations in Fiji. This chapter looks at Fiji's development status with particular emphasis on gender relations. After briefly reviewing Fiji's economic and human development issues, I discuss the status of women, and the impact of development on gender relations from early

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<sup>31</sup> This refers to the theme of the Ninth Triennial Conference of Pacific Women in August 2004 in Fiji which was "Gender Equality: Commitment or Tokenism?" at which the implementation of international gender conventions endorsed by Pacific Island governments was reviewed.

colonial times to the present day. These issues are juxtaposed with a review of Government commitments to improving women's status, followed by a discussion on 'gender' programming in Fiji. This chapter sets out to highlight the importance of involving men in gender equality efforts, and why these efforts should be pursued and continually evaluated to take into account the opportunities and challenges of reconfiguring men and women's roles and relations.

### ***Fiji as a Developing Country***

The stunning 332 islands of Fiji are located in the central South Pacific and form part of the Melanesian group of islands.<sup>32</sup> Their approximately 880,000 inhabitants are spread out over about one third of the islands, with 77% of the population residing in the capital of Suva on the main island of Viti Levu (Chandra 2000). Fiji society, once ethnically, culturally and linguistically homogenous, is now made up of indigenous Fijians (51.1%), Indo-Fijians (43.6%) and others, such as part-Europeans, Chinese, other Pacific Islanders, and Europeans (5.3%) (Government of Fiji 2004).<sup>33</sup> Fiji gained independence in 1970 from a century of British rule and is a politically functioning democracy under a national government.

Fiji's natural resources constitute its significant forest, mineral, and fish industries, resulting in the country being one of the most developed of the Pacific island economies, though still with a large subsistence sector in rural areas. Sugar exports, garment manufacturing, gold mining, and a rapidly expanding tourist industry are the major sources of foreign exchange (Government of Fiji 2004). Long-term problems include political instability, uncertain land ownership rights, and the government's ability to manage its budget in face of a vulnerable economy that relies heavily on foreign aid and remittances (Schoeffel 1996).

Even though the country has one of the most developed economies of the Pacific, the distribution of development is diverse, and in spite of Fiji's rating as a 'Medium Human Development' country, human development has not substantially improved over the past decade, hampered by three political coups - two in 1987 and one in 2000. According to the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Human Development Index (HDI) for 2003, Fiji has an HDI value of 81, falling nine places since the last HDI report when it ranked 72 (Schoeffel 2004:62). So although there is no serious food epidemic and no serious shortage of water, poverty continues to be a challenge, and in light of an expanding population and a

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<sup>32</sup> In economic, social and cultural terms, Fiji is more akin with the Polynesian societies of Samoa and Tonga than the Melanesian societies of Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu (Government of Fiji 2004).

<sup>33</sup> In this thesis I standardise the description of the two main ethnic groups referring to ethnic Fijians as 'Fijians' and Indian Fijians as 'Indo-Fijians'.

rural-urban rush, there are increasingly large pockets of poverty in built-up urban areas where squatter settlements are being populated by growing numbers of Indo-Fijians and even higher numbers of ethnic Fijians.<sup>34</sup>

It is estimated that a quarter of households in Fiji live below the global poverty line and another 20% are close to joining this group should their conditions change for the worse (UNDP & Government of Fiji 1997).<sup>35</sup> The joint UNDP and Government of Fiji poverty report (1997) notes that an unacceptable number of families are at pains to sustain a reasonable standard of living despite a high literacy rate<sup>36</sup>, reasonably long life expectancy<sup>37</sup> and low mother and child mortality<sup>38</sup>, and the numbers of families struggling below the poverty line is one of the "country's main enemies".<sup>39</sup> Adding to the poverty problem is unemployment, particularly for the 12,000 school leavers per year who compete for approximately 2,000 new jobs in the formal sector (Walsh in Monsell-Davis 2000:210), and low wages are insufficient to keep families above the poverty line, even for multiple income households. Subsequent to the 1997 poverty report, a Value Added Tax (VAT) has been imposed, the currency has been devalued, and water costs have increased (FWRM, FWCC & ECREA 2002).

Reform pressures from neo-liberal economic policies promoted through globalisation and trade agreements aggravate the skewed distribution of development, and costly defence spending and debt servicing cut into basic social service budgets (ESCAP 2002:47; Slatter 1994). It is also argued that the overall ethos of Fiji's development is economic as opposed to people-centred, undermining the "basic fabric of Pacific Island society" (Secretariat of the Pacific Community 2001:4), and gender-biased reforms hamper provisions for the vulnerable and disadvantaged, particularly women, promoting the "feminisation of poverty" (FWRM, FWCC & ECREA 2002; National Council of Women Fiji 2002; see also Griffen 1994).

The asymmetrical distribution of development is also underscored by Fiji's "highly charged political environment" (George 2004:21) perpetuated by ongoing race issues between ethnic and

<sup>34</sup> As well as heading to the city for employment and education opportunities, ethnic Fijians are being cleared off increasing quantities of contested land. See "State defends poverty plans", *Fiji Times*, 7 August 2004, and "Landless Fijians top squatter list" *Fiji Sun*, 18 August 2004.

<sup>35</sup> The Fiji Council of Social Services argues that the poverty level figure is realistically closer to 50% if the impact of the May 2000 coup and expiry of land leases are taken into account. See George (2004:13) and [www.sidsnet.org/archives/other-newswire/2003/msg00631.html](http://www.sidsnet.org/archives/other-newswire/2003/msg00631.html), accessed November 2004.

<sup>36</sup> Adult literacy rate stands at 93.2% while youth literacy stands at 99.2% (UNDP 2003).

<sup>37</sup> Life expectancy as at 2001 is 69.3 years. Life expectancy for men is 67.7 and for women 71.1 (UNDP 2003).

<sup>38</sup> Maternal mortality rate is 20 per 100,000 live births and child mortality is 18 per 1,000 live births (UNDP 2003).

<sup>39</sup> The Prime Minister, Laisenia Qarase, quoted by the Honourable Ro Teimumu Kepa in her opening speech at the UNFPA strategy meeting in 2002. This statement was followed with an assurance that one of the Government's key missions is to redistribute resources more fairly (Kepa 2002).

Indo-Fijians. Human and women's rights activist and lawyer, Imrana Jalal, frames much of Fiji's struggle with poverty in a political light, citing that "poverty and other problems existing before May 2000 are now considerably worse, seriously affecting women and children" (Save the Children Fund in Jalal 2002:28).

Indeed the social impacts of three political coups have had wide-ranging societal repercussions in terms of the "entrenchment of Christian fundamentalism, ethnic chauvinism and other anti-democratic forces" (Emberson-Bain & Slatter 1995:4; Smiles 2004), effectively "derailing" feminist progress (Jalal 2002:28; see also Emberson-Bain 1994). Findings from the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre's (2001:17) research supports the view that recurring political instability has provoked the frequency and intensity of domestic violence against women in the form of tension, arguments, and verbal and physical abuse. Three of my development sector respondents interviewed for this thesis believe that the position of women has worsened, citing increasing militarism and a resurgence of machismo and religious fundamentalism as key reasons behind this regression in status, undermining efforts to equalise gender relations (see also Jalal 1997, 2002; Fiji Women's Crisis Centre 2001; Huffer 2004; Griffen 2004).<sup>40</sup>

### ***The Status of Women in Fiji***

Gender discrimination is prevalent in Fiji among its diverse cultural groups (Ministry for Women & Culture 1998) despite the latest Millennium Development Goal report that points to a closing gender gap in many areas (Secretariat of the Pacific Community 2004). For example, in education women are now doing as well, if not, better, than boys at school, and staying longer (Schoeffel 2004; Goodwillie, Schoeffel & Rao 2005), though less females have a tertiary qualification than men. And women who continue their education tend to enrol in gender-traditional courses such as nursing, teaching and secretarial work. Likewise, as women's participation in the employment sector has increased, women continue to dominate lower wage, semi-skilled occupations such as domestic help, cleaning, waitressing, teaching, nursing and administration.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>That political stability is a precondition for gender equitable development is an oft-cited point. For example Chris Dolan (2003) discusses the impacts of political instability on women's advancement in his Northern Ugandan study, and notes that a weak state also undermines masculinities. Mario de Araujo (2004) also draws the links between state violence and personal violence in his case study of gender-based violence in Timor Leste.

<sup>41</sup>Gender discrimination is rife within the education and medical professions. For example, predominantly female nursing students receive an allowance of \$1.14 per day versus medicine students, mostly male, who receive \$5 a day. Compare the \$10,000 annual library budget for the nursing school with the School of Medicine's \$150,000 budget. Doctors are also being substituted by nurses in rural areas without any increase of pay, a "silent way of accommodating cheap labour since the majority of [nurses] are women" (National Council of Women 2002:14).

These gender biases in education and employment are symptomatic of persistent beliefs that the careers of females should remain in the ‘feminine’ and domestic spheres rather than the professional domain. But they are also indicative of a globalisation phenomenon which demands women’s labour as they are the gender currently favoured by international trade rules (FWCC, FWRM & ECREA 2002; Malua 2004; Goodwillie, Schoeffel & Rao 2005). This latter point is evidenced by the increasing numbers of women working in factories, which have come under scrutiny recently as predominantly female staff are subject to extremely long working hours and sexual harassment in Tax Free Zone factories (FWRM, FWCC & ECREA 2002; Goodwillie, Schoeffel & Rao 2005).<sup>42</sup> Conversely, far fewer women than men are engaged in management and leadership positions, and at last census they constituted only 1.8% of the total number of executives at this level (Schoeffel 2004:56). Women’s absence in decision making positions is a “loss to the efficient running of the country as a whole and is of concern” (Lechte 1978:169).

The Government’s commitment to achieving a 30% minimum participation of women in the public sector has also not been met. Since Independence, women gained the right to stand as Members of Parliament, and despite a relative increase of women in government, few enter politics and succeed, while men continue to dominate state affairs both at the national and local levels. At time of writing, women hold only four of the seventy seats in parliament (International Parliamentary Union in Schoeffel 2004:29), which corresponds to prevailing beliefs that men are the decision makers while a woman’s place is in the home “or behind her husband, not in Parliament” (Goodwillie, Schoeffel & Rao 2005:119; Tuivaga 1988).

Deep-rooted gender norms sustain women’s inferior status, particularly in the domestic domain, and gender-based violence is prevalent. For example, there is widespread tolerance of domestic violence in Fiji, and women themselves are culturally and socially conditioned to believe that men are able and allowed to hit their wives (Aucoin 1990; Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre 1998). Bearing in mind that violence is commonly under-reported, the Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre (1998) estimate that 66% of Fijian women have been beaten by their husbands or partners, and 48% have been coerced into having sex with their husbands. Added to this is the notion that a woman’s right to choose to reject a violent relationship is still not acceptable for a majority of Fijian families (Kaitani 2000; Plange 2000).

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<sup>42</sup> These concerns were highlighted in a very publicly criticised and censored documentary released in 2001, where prominent women’s activist and politician Atu Emberson-Bain cast aspersions on the negative impacts of globalisation through detailed accounts of the poor working conditions of women in the tuna industry in the 1990s.

Women in violent relationships are fifty percent more likely to contract sexually transmitted infections than women who are not in a violent partnership (Fiji Women's Crisis Centre 2004b), and some of these infections are life threatening such as HIV/AIDS. According to a joint Government of Fiji and UNICEF report (1996:34), domestic violence is a significant cause of women's injury and general illness "encouraged by a double standard in sexual behaviour where the promiscuity of men is overlooked, if not condoned". Women's health and well-being is also influenced by male attitudes towards sexual and reproductive practices. For example, many Fijian men consider condom use within marriage a burden and an impediment to pleasure, though they are often happy to use condoms for extra-marital sex (Plange 2000). Women's health problems are therefore not only caused by dietary intake, pregnancy and childbearing complications, and reproductive diseases, but also social and economic inequalities including emotional, physical and sexual abuse.

Many of these social inequalities and gender discriminative practices tend to be denounced as 'Fijian' values and norms. Yet the picture is not this straightforward. Gender discrimination is arguably a confluence of culture and historical transformations connected with colonialism (Emerson-Bain & Slatter 1995) and can be attributed to the 'West' as much as 'Fiji' after two centuries of European contact.

### ***The Development of Gender Norms as History***

Although there is a dearth of information on the relationships between women and men and associated cultural practices in pre-contact Fiji, it is clear that Fijian society was patriarchal prior to colonisation. However from the early nineteenth century onwards attitudes towards Fijian women, along with other social, economic and political issues, as well as Fijian 'tradition' itself, were influenced by the presence of Europeans. In 1874 when Fiji became a British colony under a Deed of Cession, British ideas about gender relations, largely based on an Anglo-Christian ethos, brought mixed results for Fijian women. On the one hand there were some improvements, particularly in terms of legislation and education, but on the other hand many patriarchal attitudes and behaviours were reinforced.

#### **Gender Norms Pre-Colonisation**

Prior to colonisation, the authority of Fijian men was absolute and derived from a number of sources. Men were leaders at the societal level – as district, village, and clan heads – and presided over religious practices that centred on the clans' men's houses (Weber 1958 in Aucoin 1990:26). This authority extended by default to the family, including the wife, as men operated

their households much like a chief whose “decisions are final and whose actions are unquestioned” (Watters 1969:237). However women did not perceive their positions as inferior *per se*, rather as complementary to their husbands, because they believed that their gender roles were divinely sanctioned and unchangeable, for the good of the family and the wider community, and they readily accepted the *status quo* (Tongamo 1988).

Women’s roles and status were determined by their social rank. High-ranking women were more privileged and were accorded deferential treatment. At the community and village levels, men were the key decision-makers and women were unheard except for distinguished women.<sup>43</sup> Descent was, and still is, traced through the male line, and the family’s name, land and properties are inherited through the male line. Therefore, male children were, and still are, most welcome in the family. Women and men held their respective positions in various rites of passage events, such as birth, marriage and death, according to gender and social status among family, *mataqali* (clan) and *tokatoka* (sub-lineage of *mataqali*). These duties were “carried out with dignity and pride according to cultural beliefs and customs” (Tuivaga 1988:4).

Females were valued in terms of their roles as mothers, wives, and daughters, all required for the upkeep of the home and the community. Young married women were important for not only continuing their same domestic responsibilities in the immediate family, but also extending their services to the husband’s kin network. As well as having the responsibility for the well-being of their families as mothers and wives, women worked the land and were involved in subsistence activities such as harvesting of crops and lagoon fishing, *pandanus* weaving of sleeping mats and other household items, and the manufacturing of traditional items such as pottery, *tapa* (barkcloth), and coconut oil (Schoeffel & Kikau 1980 in Tuivaga 1988:4; Aucoin 1990). Skilled women performed more specialised tasks such as midwifery, healing and massage, using traditional herbs and remedies.

Patriarchy was, and is, by no means monolithic in Fiji. Challenging patriarchal tendencies in the culture, particularly pre-colonialism, was the notion of *vasu*. This refers to the rights and links women and their children have through connection with their brothers. *Vasu* had the potential to be very strong politically and a partial balance to the strength of patriarchy and the patrilineal line (Ravuvu 1983).

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<sup>43</sup> This is still the case today, for example, the funeral of Lady Ratu Mara, the wife of the late politician Ratu Mara, was an event of national significance in 2004 and it received much media attention.

### Colonial Influence on the Status of Women and Men

While Fijian society was transformed by the thousands of Indians brought over by the British to work on sugar plantations, it is the British who have had an indelible influence on *vaka i taukei* - the 'Fijian way of life' (Ravuvu 1983), to the point that what is now regarded as 'traditional' practices, protocols, beliefs and structures, were shaped by this Anglo-Saxon contact. For example, in terms of religion and culture, Fijians deem Christianity to be unequivocally Fijian, as much as they consider their chiefs to be traditional figures of authority (Kaplan 1993:39). Likewise the notion of reciprocity as 'indigenous' is seen as running in opposition to the European and Indian "life in the way of money" (Kaplan 1993:39), and accumulating money is considered a threat to Fijian culture (Toren in Yabaki & Norton 2004:5). This is despite the reality that many chiefs are often economically driven members of a national elite. Nevertheless chiefs are regarded as preservers of Fijian tradition, including the Fijian 'tradition' of Christianity, and mediate between the Fijian people and the 'world of money'.

With the arrival of missionaries, the "heathen cannibals whose customs included widow-strangling and buying their relatives alive" were eventually tamed (France 1969:22). For women this meant that customary practices such as polygamy, female infanticide, the murder of chief's wives by their husbands, strangling of chiefs' widows, the tribute giving of women, abduction of married women, and forced marriages, were outlawed (France 1969; Tuivaga 1988; Toren 1999). However what was also outlawed was the right for Fijian women to practice 'traditional' medicine, as it was associated with witchcraft and sorcery. Under a native regulation act the colonial government outlawed the practice and anyone who was not a registered government medical officer or nurse was subject to prosecution (Waqavonovono in Griffen 1983:148).

Western customs also brought some important constitutional improvements for Fijian women. The colonial government introduced formal laws, replacing arbitrary tribal laws, for example, the Married Women's Property Act (1892) which gave women custodial rights if she could prove culpability on behalf of her husband. New matrimonial property laws allowed women at least one third of entitlement, providing she contributed more to the property than her husband (Tuivaga 1988), and education was made available to both boys and girls.

On the other hand, male-biased attitudes that the British and other Europeans brought with them reinforced gender inequalities, particularly in the domestic sphere. The heavy workload of women in their productive and reproductive capacities – as food producers, caregivers, nurturers and teachers within the family – is largely a product of contact with outsiders. The behaviour and expectations of colonial women themselves influenced the Fijian woman's lifestyle, and the roles and skills of Fijian women gradually changed. Sewing and other domestic skills gradually

replaced agriculture, horticulture, fishing and medicine-making (Tuivaga 1988), and while women's participation in education and employment increased, they were still expected to meet their responsibilities at home. Women's roles expanded even further with new Christian religious responsibilities such as fundraising activities for the church, attending choirs, fellowship meetings and Sunday schools (Tuivaga 1988; Yabaki & Norton 2004).

Because the colonial government dealt mainly with men, they reinforced chiefly hierarchies and patriarchy, imbuing "a male perspective of custom and a reflection of colonial stereotypes about women" (Jalal 1997:83). These attitudes were justified with Christian teachings about male authority and women's subordination, restricting women from developing to their full potential (Thaman in Yabaki & Norton 2004:4). For example, that a man should have one wife, as opposed to many, whom he should not only care for but also protect is a concept introduced by Christian missionaries (Schoeffel 1994). Schoeffel (1994:365) also argues that the control of wives, often by forceful means, was a pre-existing social phenomenon legitimised by Christian missionaries, and it was missionaries who taught Fijians that "husband and wife should share the same dwelling, along with their children, and that men should be the providers and women their helpmates".<sup>44</sup>

### ***The Impact of Development on Gender Relations***

Westernisation continues to influence Fijian society and gender norms, again with mixed results. For example, women are becoming more economically independent and becoming more aware of their 'rights' due to their increased involvement in the labour market and their contact with Western ideas through development programmes, technology and the media. But development and change has also caused some stresses in terms of social relations, for example, the gradual disintegration of traditional social mechanisms to control violence (Aucoin 1990; Schoeffel 1994, 2004; Monsell-Davis 2000). Coupled with a male backlash against women's greater access to paid employment (Carrillo 1992; Schoeffel 1996), these symptoms of social change highlight the dichotomous nature of development and change on gender relations.

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<sup>44</sup> Traditionally, a newly wed couple lived with the husband's parents for several years, and after building a separate house with their children, the husband's parent's house remained a focal point for the domestic unit. The domestic unit was a large one by today's standards. It included grandparents, parents, sons and unmarried daughters, sons' wives and their children (Aucoin 1990:25).

### Development of the Labour Market and its Impact on Gender

Economic development has been criticised for exacerbating gender inequalities such as violence (Pleck 1983 and Lisak 1991 in Leckie 2002:169; Carrillo 1992 and Bradley 1997 in George 2004). In particular, women's increased earning capacities bring about a *de facto* shift in power relations and men may feel they are "losing control of the household" (Carrillo in George 2004:19). In Fiji there are growing numbers of women who are the primary income earners for their families, even directly competing with men for jobs in the industrial sector.<sup>45</sup> And while female employment is becoming the only or best option for many families, it is socially unacceptable and may intensify culturally sanctioned violence, as men feel responsible for something that is largely out of their control. The pressure for men to live up to the breadwinning expectation is also exacerbated by policy and projects driven by the assumption that "households are headed by a male breadwinner who dispenses assets to his wife and children" (Pollock 2003:90; see also ESCAP 2002:11).

The shifting gender order, particularly as a result of labour market changes, threatens to impact men's identities and self-confidence as they struggle to meet the expectation of being the breadwinner. This issue resounded in my interviews, as the following comment illustrates:

If my wife was breadwinner it would be very hard. Because I'm supposed to work. And it's my personal belief too. I don't know if I could deal with it (40 year old rural male).

Rural Fijian men are particularly vulnerable in coming to terms with unemployment given that traditional obligations are more likely to be upheld in rural villages, as another of my respondents noted:

Guys would have a problem with women as a sole breadwinner, especially in the rural areas where we are teaching the principle that man has got to be 'the one' (19 year old rural male).

Keating (2004:54) observes that many men are fearful that if a woman is the primary income earner, she may also wish, or demand, to be 'the one', or the head of the household. The men and women I spoke to for this thesis appeared to be very aware of the *de facto* power that women gain with financial independence. They regarded female breadwinners to be bestowed with special 'privileges', as one male said:

Women have the power when she is working and man doesn't work, rather he is babysitting and cooking, then woman can be boss of the house (35 year old urban male).

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<sup>45</sup> In an effort to increase their employment options, women in Fiji are now fighting for equal employment opportunities in the mining sector, a traditionally male dominated environment. See *Fiji Times*, 7 August 2004.

Families who relied on the female's income for survival coupled with an unemployed male 'head of household' was even suggested by one respondent as legitimate grounds for divorce:

An unemployed man always goes out, he'll leave her, even he might get divorced because he wouldn't like the fact she's got power with the money (37 year old urban male).

A Fijian sexual and reproductive health community worker framed difficulties such as male unemployment in terms of male 'disempowerment' noting that:

It is hard for many men to accept unemployment and their wives working... There is a fear of this among some men. It's a real need [to address male employment]. Few men are happy to look after the children, to cook and clean and wash and let the wife to go so they can bring in the money for the survival of the family.

As far back as the 1970s, local women's activist and YWCA director, Ruth Lechte, highlighted the impact of a changing gender order on men's identities saying:

It is still very true that in parts of the Pacific, men see female emancipation as a prospect to be feared or a government plot to undermine their traditional masculine authority. Legion are the stories of community workers on this point (Lechte 1978:169)

Very little has changed since then, and men have a vested interest in defending their privileged access to resources and opportunities (Schoeffel 1996:34), often with violent results within the family. Comments from another community worker I interviewed mirrors Lechte and Schoeffel's observations:

I see violence against women increasing because of men's disempowerment and the changes they are faced with as women demand more equality. Men are disempowered culturally, but Fijian men more so, especially as they are answerable to their chief, the community, their fathers and uncles. Often they don't have any right to 'speak out' until their 30s and 40s. So I feel men are struggling with disempowerment. They are brought up to believe they are "superior", but not taught that in terms of personal strengths and self-esteem. Instead they are taught to have "power over", rather than power within. Women are suffering because of this (female community worker, Suva)

**Development and the Breakdown of Traditional Social Mechanisms Protecting Women**

Traditional social mechanisms for addressing gender inequalities like violence are affected by rapid social change, particularly urbanisation and overseas migration, resulting in change and tension in traditional Fijian social relations. Approximately 51% of Fijians are now living in urban centres. This figure is projected to reach 61% by 2015 (UNDP & Government of Fiji 1997), expanding the already vast squatter settlements of internal migrants unable to find

employment in the capital of Suva and other major towns. The urban influx or ‘pull’ has exacerbated existing friction between men and women, and created new ones, and is a key factor behind violence and law and order problems (Schoeffel 1994, 2004; Monsell-Davis 2000).

Due to the deterioration of traditional community ties and kin-based support systems, incidents of family violence is less likely to be aided by community and extended family intervention (Schoeffel 2004:32; Monsell-Davis 2000). Urban households, which are often larger than their rural counterparts, are no longer made up of a “complementary labour pool with all contributing to the household income and welfare” and they struggle to provide traditional support for non-working members (Monsell-Davis 2000:211). This ‘dysfunction’ may also be played out at the relationship level, for example “brothers and their wives quarrelling over the use of cooking facilities, rather than cooking together” (Monsell-Davis 2000:212).

Aucoin’s (1990:29) description of a modern-day ‘traditional’ Fijian village details the various customs employed for reprimanding and punishing men who beat their wives and the processes of ritual reconciliation. For example, after a serious disagreement a women may leave her home for refuge with one of her own kin, in whose company she expects protection, support and accommodation. In some instances she may take her children. She may return after days or weeks if she feels her anger and her husband’s wrath has subsided. In the case of physical violence, she may stay with her family for months and may never return at all. The loyalty of her family assures that her husband will not interfere with her, and her brothers may even beat the offending husband (Aucoin 1990:35).<sup>46</sup> Reconciliation may take place only after a lengthy negotiation and atonement process with the wife and her family. This may involve gift giving of *kava* (a non-alcoholic addictive drink) and *tabua* (whales teeth), which are traditionally symbolic of a man’s wealth, and kerosene or cloth, which symbolise women’s wealth. These gifts denote the shamed husband’s humility and sincerity (Aucoin 1990:36). And although Aucoin (1990:39) makes the point that customary means of reconciliation do not prevent violence between men and women, it does “give women an avenue of escape when conflict occurs”.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Refer the description of *vasu* on page 55 of this thesis. *Vasu* was another avenue of support for women who were subject to violence by their husbands.

<sup>47</sup> It should be pointed out that women also “mete out violence” (Aucoin 1990:30), and despite its prevalence, gender violence is considered by many Fijians as serious, unnecessary and socially unacceptable. Aucoin observes that women “feel that they should be able to argue with their spouses without fearing violence” (1990:34) and men believe that violence should not occur. Yet despite these claims, Aucoin observes that few of her research informants were able to identify households in which serious disputes were absent.

It can be seen therefore that through the decrease of social support systems coupled with economic pressure and changing employment trends, development stands to both improve and deteriorate women status and gender relations, providing the impetus for gender inequality to be taken seriously as a development issue.

### ***Gender Inequality as a Development Issue***

Gender inequality is increasingly regarded as a development problem in Fiji, partly because more notice is being taken of the economic cost of violence, particularly in response to donor agendas and the high profile public advocacy work of two internationally funded NGOs, the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre and the Fiji Women's Rights Movement. Prior to the May 2000 coup, the government commissioned research on this issue (FWRM, FWCC & ECREA 2002). Although the research was subsequently abandoned, in order for their cause to be addressed the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre promoted the economic impacts of violence on Fiji's development, highlighting losses in employment days, welfare expense, law enforcement and health care for victims of violence (George 2004:19), which accumulatively cost the nation approximately \$300 million per year.<sup>48</sup>

Fiji is addressing gender inequalities more rapidly than other Pacific nations and the Government is committed to promoting women's empowerment and gender equality by "strengthening the enabling institutions, [implementing] gender awareness programmes established in the civil service, [and integrating] gender issues in the legal system and in review of laws" (Government of Fiji 1999). They are the only Pacific island state to seriously implement comprehensive policy changes on women's conjugal rights in the form of a new Family Law Bill that took effect in January of this year.<sup>49</sup> A Domestic Violence Law Reform Bill has also been drafted and awaiting approval, and a new Industrial Relations Bill addressing sexual harassment in the work place is being developed. The Fiji Police force also implemented a "no-drop" policy in 2004 to ensure that any abuse complaints made to the police regarding gender violence are followed through.

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<sup>48</sup> Quoted by Shamima Ali (Coordinator for the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre), in interview for "Close Up" televised by Fiji One TV, 15 August 2004.

<sup>49</sup> The Family Law Bill recognises women's non-financial contribution in a marriage, where wives are now eligible for a share of matrimonial property in the case of divorce, and economic value is prescribed to women's unpaid work by stipulating an equal share of property. The Bill also allots equal opportunity for parental custodial rights to both spouses, and redefines the term "family" to include *de facto* relationships.

Fiji was also the first Pacific island state to ratify CEDAW<sup>50</sup>, and they have endorsed the Pacific Platform for Action (PPA) and the Beijing Platform for Action (BPA), although CEDAW was ratified with reservations. Concerns centred on the impact of the Convention on cultural practices and social norms of behaviour that are considered the mainstay of Fijian society (Secretariat of the Pacific Community 2004; Schoeffel 2004). In particular, there were reservations about the transformation of social and cultural conduct and relations between women and men highlighting the “contradictions of gender equality and the politics of tradition” (Leckie 2002:172).

The resources and efforts assigned to the ‘gender’ issue also tend to be driven by under-funded government departments and mainstream women’s organisations operating within a WID framework. So despite these commitments to gender conventions, and the admirable law changes implemented in Fiji, amending and updating laws and institutions will not only be ineffective in the face of entrenched attitudes which devalue women’s lives (Rogers 2004:177), but also risk parading as symbolic, window-dressing when the majority of gender-based interventions remain ‘ghettoised’ in the WID sphere.

#### **Women in Development ('WID') in Fiji**

In Fiji WID has dominated ‘gender’ planning and implementation as in other Pacific Island countries. Over the past forty or so years the most active women’s organisations have been church-based, for example the Methodist women’s group *Soqosogo Vakamarama*, the Catholic Women’s League and the Fiji Muslim Women’s League. Representing these and other women’s groups at the government level is the National Council of Women (NCW). This organisation is relatively conservative and although there is some diversity among the groups represented by the NCW, the activities and principles of its member organisations are aligned with WID philosophy, operating within religious dimensions. For example, projects generally address women in their domestic and community roles, such as increasing their participation within the church, or income generation activities and education in the areas of nutrition, cooking, sewing, childcare and health (Schoeffel 1994:368). Men, and their roles in women’s lives have been, and are, rarely addressed, although for some time now there has existed a reasonably high level of awareness among some women’s groups that women and men’s complementary roles are insufficient in bringing about equality as “equality without power cannot make progress” (Pacific Conference of Churches 1979:12).

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<sup>50</sup> CEDAW stands for the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women, an international policy for gender equality tabled at a 1979 United Nations General Assembly.

A typical example of ‘WID’ in Fiji is in the area of reproductive health, which could be paraphrased as “maternal and child health” (Chung 1999) as project beneficiaries have been exclusively women. While these efforts have improved maternal and child health overall, limited progress has been made in the area of sexual and reproductive rights as the Government tends to promote less radical components, leaving aside issues that require deep institutional and cultural transformation, for example, abortion laws, sexuality, and power relations within the family (Smiles 2004). Put another way, the sexual and reproductive rights of women is inextricably linked with ‘women’s liberation’ in the minds of many Fijians, a threat to the gender *status quo*.

Like reproductive health, present day efforts to address gender inequalities remain within the WID framework rather than reflecting the newer GAD approaches that current government policy espouses, and even the Pacific Platform for Action has been accused of being WID rather than GAD focused (Schoeffel 2004). Policy concerning women interests remains far from being ‘mainstreamed’ and remains separate from other sectoral policy, concentrating on what women can do for development, rather than what development can do for women (Kabeer 1994). This is exemplified in an excerpt from the Government’s 1999 strategic plan:

The greater integration of women in the development process is a means to make fuller use of all human resources for economic and social development (Government of Fiji 1999)

Fijian academic and women’s activist Vanessa Griffin’s (1994) critique of the Port Vila Declaration, a regional policy position on population and sustainable development, observes that amidst all the well-meaning and well-sounding Pacific-wide commitments to integrating women in the development process there exist no policies that address the “unequal power relations between men and women, particularly in the family” (Griffen 1994:67). So what a WID focus amounts to is that men will continue to be sidelined at the policy or project levels, and efforts remain limited to working at a level that analyse women’s position in isolation from men.

Ignoring inequalities within the family and the difficulties men have of dealing with change, or the ‘crisis of masculinity’ as discussed in this Chapter and in Chapter Two, are two sound reasons for incorporating men into gender equality efforts, shifting the focus from ‘women’ to ‘women and men’, or from ‘WID’ to ‘GAD’. Change is slow, but there is one prominent organisation leading the way in terms of bringing men into the picture.

### Gender and Development ('GAD') in Fiji

In Fiji, as in other Pacific island countries, very few programmes work in partnership with men to address gender inequalities. The Fiji Women's Crisis Centre is one organisation that has pursued a risky but committed agenda since the 1980s, and under the theoretical paradigms discussed in Chapter Two, their work is in consonance with the GAD school. In particular, they have begun to work with men on violence and gender issues.<sup>51</sup> Their approach to curbing violence has confronted the "alarming reality of inequality within the family" and the unequal "gender roles ... deeply rooted in all the communities of Fiji" (CEDAW 2002). The Coordinator of the programme, Shamima Ali, insists that women's roles within the family are at the heart of its programmes, which are "based on the principles of feminism, we empower women, we believe in family" and one of their key strategies is to inform women of their rights and provide support as women make choices".<sup>52</sup> It is likely that this women's rights approach threatens many Fijians who believe that the Crisis Centre is as an organisation of 'homebreakers' (Plange 2000; Leckie in George 2004) and a 'sisterly conspiracy'.<sup>53</sup> That said, GAD programming requires a careful approach to bring men and women together in a partnership capacity.

### ***Conclusion***

This brief historical and contemporary country review shows that patriarchy in Fiji is not monolithic by any means. Rather, gender relations are complex and the current *status quo* is a confluence of historical forces, especially colonialism. Here the British have had significant influence in the religious, political and even domestic spheres, reinforcing traditional gender inequalities, but also offering opportunities for change in terms of education and new legislation – both which have the potential to bring about massive social transformation. However, although much of the rhetoric at the governmental level confirms the importance of improving the status of women through supporting global and regional gender equality conventions and programmes, large-scale gender inequalities continue to exist in Fiji, particularly at the household level. This indicates the importance of the initiatives of the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre and the Men as Partners programme in their efforts to bring men into the gender and development arena.

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<sup>51</sup> Outside of Fiji, and with the help of the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, the Vanuatu Women's Centre and the Solomon Islands Family Support Centre have recently embarked on workshops with men addressing violence against women. These programmes are based on the model developed by Fiji Women's Crisis Centre for their Male Advocacy Programme.

<sup>52</sup> Quoted by Shamima Ali (Coordinator for the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre), in interview for "Close Up" televised by Fiji One TV, 15 August 2004.

<sup>53</sup> Comment by an NGO respondent for this research.

## CHAPTER 5 The Fieldwork: Research Process and Methods

### *Introduction*

To contextualise the significance of the Men as Partners (MAP) and Fiji Women's Crisis Centre's work with men, the previous chapter reviewed the status and roles of men and women in Fiji, with a particular mention of gender programming. This chapter addresses the methods and practicalities involved with gathering my data in the described context.

Before continuing with this discussion, it is important to describe one key limitation of this thesis. The initial design of my research was an impact assessment of the Men as Partners programme, combining qualitative methods to compile a single case study. The case study was to primarily consist of interview data from men who had participated in the programme's workshops or who had visited Men as Partners clinics, and interviews with their wives. However one major setback was a lack of access to programme participants. The fieldwork overlapped with the key donor agency's final evaluation at the end of the pilot project's cycle. When I first met with the implementing NGO in Suva, the Reproductive and Family Health Association of Fiji ('RHFAF'), as agreed prior to arriving in Fiji, the MAP desk was literally in the process of being packed up and funding had ceased. Despite being given the right names and reassurances from my sanctioning contact in New Zealand, by the second week of research it became clear that access to an adequate sample size was unfeasible for a valid evaluation.

As the interview sample changed, the aims of the study altered. Initially I planned to concentrate my research on the Men as Partners programme only, in the manner of a mini-impact assessment given that the pilot phase was drawing to a close. However because I was unable to interview the quantity of participants required for the exercise I decided to undertake a comparative study of the Men as Partners project alongside an other organisation working with men, the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre. The thesis was subsequently transformed into a 'compare and contrast' exercise of two local programmes involving men in gender work.

To that end, the chapter describing the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, which I call "the contrast", is somewhat briefer than the discussion on Men as Partners, which I label "the case study", as I had significantly less material to analyse. This is not only because of the last minute decision to include the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre in my research, but also because the organisation would only disclose limited information about their male advocacy programme. Instead, I was given

official press releases, newsletters, bulletins and leaflets, which constituted secondary sources, as well as reports from the community, particularly individuals working within the social development sector, and I had the opportunity to hold two interviews with a key member of staff. While it is regrettable the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre did not grant me access to men who had participated in their workshops, I was fortunate to interview an individual who had attended both programmes. The respective background chapters, Chapters Six and Seven, are therefore markedly difference in size, and there is greater discussion about Men as Partners in Chapter Eight.

### **Study Area**

The Men as Partners pilot programme was administered through the Reproductive and Family Health Association of Fiji (RFHAF). RFHAF's head office is in downtown Suva, with a regional branch office on the west coast of the main island of Viti Levu. The head office of the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre is also in Suva. The majority of research participants lived in Suva and in and around the mining site in Vatukoula, northwest of Viti Levu. The organisations and individuals interviewed who were not affiliated with either programmes, were also situated in Suva, as were libraries and the University of the South Pacific (USP) whose Pacific collection I consulted for secondary data. The study areas are circled in Figure 1.

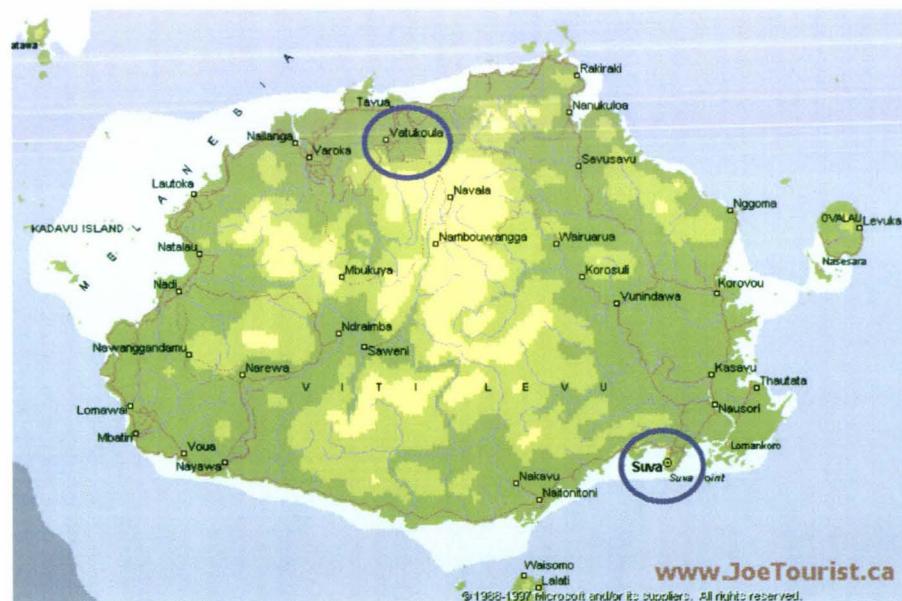


Figure 1 – Map of Viti Levu showing study areas (source: [www.joetourist.ca](http://www.joetourist.ca))

### ***Ethical and Safety Concerns***

Obtaining informed consent from men and their wives, considering potential harm to wives participating in the interviews, and thinking about ways of sharing my findings with research participants, required some deliberation. Feminist methodology prompted me to consider issues of reciprocity, trust, and advocacy, on behalf of both women and men throughout the fieldwork process.

I prepared an information letter about the nature and purpose of the research and a consent form for individuals being interviewed. In practice, both documents were inappropriate given the literacy level of the participants, but also the importance of maintaining a relaxed atmosphere was vital, and so most introductions were verbal. Interviews were confidential, identities anonymous, and interviewees were advised that they were free to terminate the interview at any stage or to decline participating. However I was also aware that “consent of the subject in no way guarantees their empowerment” (Horwitz 1993 in Mulder et al 2000:110).

In the interests of information sharing and maintaining as much of a two-way research process as possible, I advised research participants that a summary of findings would be available via their Men as Partners contact. However I knew that most informants, especially those at the village level, would be unlikely to seek this out. This was a point of difficulty for me because I was aware that even if respondents accessed what I had written, and even if they felt that I had misrepresented them, they would still have had an unequal role in terms of response (Letherby 2000:108).

Discussing the impact of the Men as Partners programme on their husbands and their relationships carried potential risks for wives, mothers, or sisters of project beneficiaries who consented to being interviewed. To mitigate the possibility of backlash in the home or the community, I structured these interviews to commence with non-threatening topics, focusing questions on people and events in a more general, abstract fashion, thereby providing female informants ‘safe’ subjects to report on if required to do so.

Potential physical or verbal risks to me were mitigated by the use of chaperones at Vatukoula and in Suva. At the gold mine in Vatukoula I was accompanied by one of the programme advocates, a Methodist church minister, who did not participate in the interviews. In Suva where I was mainly speaking to military service men, I recruited a 22 year old male with good communication skills and knowledge of the area. The assistant arranged interview times and

accompanied me to the houses of men and women being interviewed, and his local knowledge was useful in terms of communication, orientation, and personal safety.

### ***Study Methods***

Fieldwork was conducted over a six-week period in Fiji between July and August 2004 and involved the gathering of primary and secondary data. Primary data included programme materials, semi-structured and informal interviews with key informants, the transcript of a television debate, and ongoing observation. Secondary data included research papers from a conference I attended in Fiji, and statistics from government ministries, NGOs, and local libraries. Key sources of information were programme training and workshop materials, which enabled a reasonably sound assessment of the content and approach taken by both Men as Partners and the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, and helped me analyse and position the programmes in a theoretical framework.

Assessing the impact of the programme on gender relations from both male and female perspectives required a combination of information gathering techniques as a strategy of crosschecking. This is called 'triangulation' and is especially relevant when studying social phenomenon where a number of perspectives can be combined to form an impression or result. Cross checking was undertaken by analysing information from male programme participants, their wives, programme staff, and individuals formally and informally associated with the programme, and others working in the social development sector.

Interviews were categorized into five groups. The first group was made up of men who had participated in a Men as Partners workshop, visited a MAP clinic, or listened to a talk given by programme advocates. The first half of these interviews covered participants' backgrounds including family size, religion, marital status, education standard and employment situation. The second section focused on their perspectives about the Men as Partners programme and probed for changes in their outlook and relationships since their participation in or contact with the programme.

Part of the crosschecking strategy was interviewing wives of MAP participants, or other female family members in the absence of wives. These meetings were one-on-one, separate and confidential. Like the first group, questions for this second group were split into their personal situation and then project impact, with emphasis on the behaviour of husbands and

relationships. These two groups were the first sample layer, providing the key data for gauging the impact of the Men as Partners programme.

Group three consisted of programme staff. Questions focused on the design, implementation and perceived impact of both interventions. Individuals working for organisations in the field of women's empowerment, gender equality and reproductive health made up the fourth group. This group provided comment and perspective on the approach and activities of Men as Partners and the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre due to their interests in these programmes. Many comments were requested to be off the record and I had to exercise judgement when ascertaining rumour from fact.<sup>54</sup>

The fifth group consisted of casual discussions with individuals. When I first arrived several people provided local information assisting me in initial fact-finding and contextualising, while those I met in the middle and at the back end of my fieldwork provided further insights.

Quantitative secondary data was also gathered in the field, including reports and statistics from the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, several governmental ministries, and from local libraries, of which the University of the South Pacific's collection was especially relevant. Other key baseline information included two recent studies on men's attitudes towards sexual and reproductive health and gender relations in Fiji<sup>55</sup>. Some excellent data was also collected over the last two days of fieldwork at the Ninth Pacific Conference on Women, where current research papers on gender equality in the Pacific islands were disseminated. The conference was also a chance to talk to individuals in political and NGO echelons about regional gender issues.<sup>56</sup>

In New Zealand, academic articles were consulted pre- and post- fieldwork as the basis for theoretical frameworks. I also talked with individuals who were *au fait* with Pacific

<sup>54</sup> The issue of 'rumours' arose in interviews with most groups in fact. Rosaleen Duffy (2002) makes the point that rumour and gossip, albeit possessing a bad reputation, can provide researchers with vital information that is not available by other means. In this case, unsubstantiated facts about the MAP programme and the contentious subject of a male-only clinic, while being construed as rumour, is incorporated into data analysis, though I make it clear when drawing on comments that could be considered as rumour or 'unreliable evidence'.

<sup>55</sup> Namely, Nii-K Plange's Men as Partners in Family Life and Reproductive Health (2000) and Miliakere Kaitani's Safe Sex: Knowledge, Practice and Contradictions: A Case Study of Fijian Men in Urban Suva (2000).

<sup>56</sup> Like previous years there were very few men at this year's conference, indicating that 'gender' is still regarded as a women's issue in the Pacific. The conference theme was "Gender Equality: Commitment or Tokenism" where key presentations discussed country progress against the Pacific and the Beijing Platforms for Action, including best practice models of national initiatives for gender equality in the region. For conference information see [www.spc.org.nc/Women/Publications/9thPC&2Minister/9th\\_region.htm](http://www.spc.org.nc/Women/Publications/9thPC&2Minister/9th_region.htm).

development issues. Some of this information is included in this thesis and is referenced as 'personal communication'.

### ***Epistemology or 'the me in the research'***<sup>57</sup>

Discussing the 'me' in the research is part of the feminist practice of reflexivity and shouldn't be seen as "'mere navel gazing' [or] a form of 'self adoration'" (Letherby 2000:96). It is an important process of critically exploring and analysing the nature of my research and how my assumptions about gender relations underpin the process of investigation (Fonow and Cook 1991). In Marx's view, personal ethnicity, gender, class and age perspective structure a person's reality (Hawkesworth in Allen and Baber 1992:3). Therefore my epistemology, my 'way of knowing' plays a significant role.

The 'me' in the research influenced my initial selection of the topic. Gayle Letherby (2000:95) comments that although personal experiences are not an essential ingredient of research, they do make a difference, from the choice of topic to the collection and analysis of information. From a young age I was taught the merits of equality between the sexes. Physical and verbal abuse underpinned my father's desire to escape the cycle of domestic violence and he frequently articulates the benefits of re-designing the masculine mould. Reading about and observing social changes as a result of the women's movement continues to influence my worldview and interests. Therefore the selection of this research topic can be considered to be a result of my feminist beliefs about the importance of gender justice at the micro and macro levels.

The selection of the topic was also influenced by work experience. Co-facilitating sexual and reproductive health workshops for women in India in 2002 highlighted the potential negative impacts of the work on domestic relationships. I witnessed first-hand the lack of control women had over their own bodies and anecdotal feedback from the field suggested that increased tension in the home was a by-product of the programme. Reaching out to women alone threatened to be counter-productive and promoting a change in power relations can be futile without involving men and appreciating the local, complex, dynamic and diverse realities of people in different cultures. My research therefore was a natural progression from this work experience.

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<sup>57</sup> Borrowed from Margaret Chesney (2001).

The ‘me’ in the research also threatened to bias the direction of the interviews and data analysis. I struggled listening to people articulate strong resistance to what I deemed to be good change. As women and men expressed contempt for the idea of equality, this tested my mettle as a researcher and I constantly reminded myself that feminism in many developing countries is still widely perceived as a foreign and irrelevant “white, middle-class, heterosexual, liberal movement” (Allen and Baber 1992:5).

While admitting my own limitations in seeing the world through Western eyes, the process of self-criticism, or reflexivity, assisted me in the role of researcher to overcome the ubiquitous expert trap belying development practice. I was also mindful that the research was concerned with the intimate topic of personal relationships and that I was moving in territory guarded by, what one respondent described, as a ‘culture of silence’. This contrasted with my own culture’s candidness about such matters. Interviews therefore had to be thoughtfully worded.

### Research and Power

Feminist research is also acutely aware of the grid of power relations between gender, ethnicity, class, sex and religion. In order to minimise these differences in power, forging links of identity between the researcher and the researched has been a priority for feminists. My identity, particularly my ethnicity and gender, influenced the interviews. I noted in my diary that I felt limitations in terms of honest feedback, as a *palangi* (foreigner) and as a woman.

As a woman interviewing men about their personal lives, I anticipated limitations of depth and sincerity in responses, missing subtleties a male researcher may have been in a better position to pick up on. Previous female researchers in Fiji addressing men about sexual and reproductive health issues encountered barriers, including difficulty with openness and embarrassment (see Kaitani 2000:29). I also considered Bob Pease’s (2000) observations that when men do research on men, there is greater potential to pick up the nuances in terms of how men construct themselves in a dominant position. Yet in terms of gauging men’s attitudes towards women, perhaps I was in a position of strength to reveal this consciousness as one of my journal entries notes that “I was taken aback when he said in our interview that when I walked in the room he thought about ‘sex’, and I feel sure that he was endeavouring to disarm me”. Sexual innuendo clearly shaped up to be an occupational hazard of being a female researcher interviewing men.

Power relations were most evident as a *palangi* (foreigner). Although some of the men seemed more confident than the women, I recorded in my diary that I noticed that male respondents

showed a degree of deference that I wasn't expecting, for example asking at the end of the interview "can I go now?". This deference seemed more prevalent among older participants. Some of the men interviewed at the MAP clinic in Vatukoula also insisted that I should sit on the side of the desk where the counsellors normally reside. In order to encourage informality, I indicated a clear preference to sit opposite interviewees face to face, and felt this lent itself to a more informal, honest interview process.

Power relations were also exemplified in some of the interview sessions where the Fijian custom of favour seeking, *kerekere*, was exercised. Some male and female respondents asked whether I could facilitate work opportunities in Suva and New Zealand either for themselves or for their children. These requests exemplified the power relations inherent in my fieldwork, as I was perceived to be able to pull strings to enhance their personal circumstances. As much as I would have liked to assist in the spirit of reciprocity and in respect of *kerekere*, I was bound by research protocol that tied my respondents to the role of voluntarily sharing information. However during or at the end of the interviews, I welcomed respondents to ask me questions. I felt, as Acker and associates did (1991) that I wanted to give *something* back, or at the very least indicate my willingness to reciprocate. I anticipated the interviews with many of the women would be relatively un-prompted two-way conversations, much like my experiences in India<sup>58</sup>, yet I was surprised at their lack of forwardness. Some were forthcoming when I asked the questions, however many were shy instigating questions about the research or me. This led me to feel I was exploiting the situation, as it was clear I stood to gain more from the interviews than my informants did.

### **Practical issues**

This section outlines some practical issues that if not considered within a spirit of people-centred development, could be perceived as frustrating fieldwork constraints. Some of these constraints included working with staff and unpaid volunteers who had finished their official employment, the recruitment of research participants, lack of adequate time to conduct interviews, the use of a tape recorder, and local work ethic that clashed with both my fieldwork schedule and work ethic.

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<sup>58</sup> In India in 2002, I undertook a village survey for a local NGO. Both men and women were highly inquisitive, wanting to know whether I was married, how many children I had, and asked a number of questions about my country and family. At the reproductive health workshops I co-facilitated in north India later that year, women queried me about my own experiences with menstruation and intimate relations. With this as my reference point, I was surprised at the Fijian women's guardedness, and in retrospect consider this deference a consequence of colonialism.

Before departing New Zealand I decided to undertake fieldwork as independently as possible, and I stayed at a hotel. My work experience in India and comments from a fellow student, who had completed fieldwork in Thailand, prompted this decision. Residing with local people and research contacts, my student colleague regretted the lack of distance from his fieldwork facilitators and interviewees, and felt the pressure of being 'on' all the time. Working in rural India also prepared me for aspects of living and working in the field where the felt need to reciprocate, contribute and do favours for hosts was a reality (see also Leslie & Storey 2003). Having my own accommodation meant that after meetings and interviews I could go 'home' and switch off, completing journal entries and organising my schedule.

One initial drawback was the lack of phone services at the hotel, but this turned out to be a blessing in disguise as the mobile phone I purchased took the heat out of potentially stressful situations as I repeatedly encountered 'Fiji time'. On one occasion I endured a one and a half hour wait for my assistant to accompany me to interviews. Being able to call his home to gauge an estimated time of arrival consoled me. Yet this *laissez faire* approach impacted my schedule as interviews took an inordinately long time to be organised and I had to push my assistant to arrange interviews before my fieldwork came to a close.

My dependence on one individual to access programme participants to interview proved problematic. Working through the MAP programme coordinator was the only viable and ethical way in which to access key informants for the case study sample. However the coordinator's role with both RFHAF and MAP had officially ceased not long after I arrived in Suva and I received sporadic support when encountering problems accessing research participants. The quantity and quality of interviews was therefore limited to those contacts the coordinator supplied and as such the case study sample is potentially subject to biases.

### ***Limitations***

As outlined at the beginning of this chapter, the major limitation was the lack of primary data for assessing the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre's male advocacy programme. But there were other limitations too.

The majority of Men as Partners respondents were programme advocates. Categorically, they were people who supported the programme through voluntarily distributing leaflets and condoms in the community. This meant that biases were inevitable, reflected by the nature of

feedback, which I recorded in my field notes resembled a “repetitive promotion/sales job”. I was also aware that the project coordinator had pre-empted my arrival, and the presence of him and his wife in the first two interviews influenced the information in those interviews. I wrote in my diary that while “there is no problem in finding staff or members of the project team to talk to, I am still searching to talk with men ‘on the other side’”. While the higher level contacts the coordinator gave me were well acquainted with the community, there is every likelihood that this worked against the objective to amass as wide a point of view as possible.

Another limitation was the project sample of Men as Partners interviewees, of which all were Fijians. This was partly a reflection of the sample’s demographics as the ethnic breakdown of the military force is predominantly Fijian, and partly due to programme objectives which stipulated the need to target those men at greater risk of STDs. National statistics indicate a greater degree of disease susceptibility among Fijians than Indo-Fijians, therefore it is for this reason the intervention concentrated on this group. However, for a reproductive health project servicing a company who employs a mixed ethnic workforce such as the Emperor Gold Mine in Vatukoula, I was surprised to encounter no Indo-Fijians at the MAP clinic there.<sup>59</sup>

Respondents also appeared to associate me with the donors of the programme, and therefore broad statements such as “the programme is really good” confirmed suspicions that the facilitators of my interviews were not clear about my role as an independent researcher. One interviewee mistook me as a UNFPA representative, and his opinions changed dramatically when he realised I was not associated with that organisation.

Former paid staff continuing in their roles in a voluntary capacity were not as helpful as I would have liked. The coordinator designated two of these individuals to assist identifying informants I could interview, but enthusiasm was lacking, exemplified by a shortage of interview participants. I noted in my diary that I felt I had to push the MAP people about needing to talk to mineworkers because “they won’t organise it otherwise”. However this is not surprising given the MAP programme had nearly all but wound down at the gold mine.

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<sup>59</sup> This may indeed be because there is a greater need to work with ethnic Fijians than Indo-Fijians. For example, Indo-Fijians are more likely to seek counselling and assistance than ethnic Fijians (FWCC 2001b) and be more involved in family planning and reproductive health issues (Chandra 2000). A study on fertility commissioned by the Fiji Bureau of Statistics also pointed to wider use of contraception among Indo-Fijians (Seniloli 2002). However I have difficulty in ruling out inherent project prejudices, hinted at by key informants in the NGO sector.

Lack of time was a problem when interviewing programme participants and their wives, and I noted in my field diary the frustration with getting to the 'guts' of the topic with time restrictions. Interviews lasted on average between 45 and 60 minutes which was not long enough to earn the confidence - in both senses of the word - of research participants at the village level, especially given the nature of discussion. However lack of time reflected the social and economic reality of programme participants. One man I interviewed was on his way home after a 14-hour shift at the gold mine. He greeted me wearing overalls and gloves, looking exhausted and unenthusiastic. Yet that interview yielded some valuable feedback. Another example was when very satisfactory dialogue with one of the participant's wives was cut short as her children returned home ready for dinner, which she was late in preparing due to our interview.

Conversely, I felt that time limitation was not so problematic for the interviews with NGO staff and other respondents from Suva, some of whom could be categorized as 'urban elite'. These individuals were very forthcoming with their views of both programmes. This reflected an urban-rural difference. Urban social sector workers are more likely to be familiar with Western ideas and the language of 'development' through their education and work experiences, and my respondents had ready opinions on the issues presented, talking the language of subordination and rights (Arnfed 2000). Signe Arnfed (2000:78) succinctly describes this phenomenon when she argues that external donor policies can acculturate local staff and beneficiaries into Western ways, and in gender and development efforts, result in women learning to see themselves as oppressed. While this was evident in my interviews with NGO workers and other educated urban respondents, this 'language of oppression' was not evident in my interviews with programme participants' wives.

Lack of a proper venue was also a problem for some of the interviews. An interview with one military recruit and his wife was conducted in an open space reserved for drinking *kava*, which was outside in their garden. My assistant explained that it was considered inappropriate to talk inside and as the husband refused to leave his wife and myself alone in the open, I experienced uncomfortable and stilted dialogue with her, accompanied by numerous mosquito bites.

### **Data Collection**

Collecting data was the most exciting and challenging part of the research process. The chosen topic provided the opportunity to visit Fiji for the first time, and people were generally convivial and willing to share their culture and views, and this not only enhanced my personal enjoyment

but also invaluable for 'observation'. However in the context of formal fieldwork, there was a lot of waiting around for interviews to be arranged and for field assistants to avail themselves, which made sustaining momentum and enthusiasm arduous at times. Sometimes I felt I was imposing and that people were talking to me because they were instructed to do so. Therefore the degree of participation in the interviews was inconsistent, and the semi-structured format was more or less structured depending upon the gender, education and age of the respondent, and the venue and time available.

For the first round of interviews, which were held at the gold mine, I used a tape recorder. All respondents, with the exception of one woman, agreed to share information on tape. But it was clear that many were uneasy. The deciding moment to forgo taping was during one uncharacteristically short interview with a woman who immediately opened up once the tape ran out, and the interview ran to an hour and a half. Although I missed many comments verbatim when note taking, the quality of information improved without the recording device as people were more relaxed. It was clear that the more informal the conversations were, the better, and that it was imperative that I try to establish a rapport when time and venue allowed.

Journal entries reveal that I felt many of the answers were tailored to what informants believed I wanted to hear. A number of men and women asked if they were giving me the 'right' answers, and as observed elsewhere (Swaney 1990, Elmquist 1992 and Hardy-Boys 1994 in Cribb 1995:48), this would appear to be characteristic of Pacific Islanders. Those I spoke with at the village level clearly wished to please, and as an unavoidable element of my fieldwork, 'faking' as Klein (in Cribb 1995:48) calls it, is significant and should be either acknowledged as a "relative truth or an appropriate response in a specific context" (Cribb 1995:49).

This 'faking' was evident in many of the men's answers as my methods of triangulation revealed. In speaking with one man's wife, I learnt that one of the men, who claimed to have been married once, was on to a second marriage and a "second kitchen".<sup>60</sup> Another interview with an educated medical professional who moved in elite circles, was distinctive for its promotion of MAP and an emphasis on the immorality of infidelity. However a meeting with a female member of the community the following day suggested this individual was in no position to criticise infidelity.

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<sup>60</sup> In Fiji, a man who has a wife and a mistress (or two) is said to have a "second (or third) kitchen". See Glossary, page ix.

There seemed an unbridgeable distance between the male participants and myself, and their reticence in opening up meant that these interviews were more quantitative and survey-like in style rather than in-depth and qualitative. Men preferred to answer direct questions and so these interviews tended to be more structured than those with the women. Obtaining 'real' information from men I felt was not only due to lack of time and rapport building, but men's relative disinterest in sharing personal information with a woman.

By contrast, the women were relatively keen to discuss their experiences. Interviews with the women were less structured. The women were more open than the men and I sensed a greater degree of honesty. Some of the more revealing information about the MAP concept and implementation came from men's wives. For some of these women, the programme gave them hope of improving their lives, and this was particularly evident for those who were subject to violence from their partners. Others hinted at hypocrisy of the 'partnership' aspect of the programme as their husbands were so involved promoting MAP that felt they were absconding from their responsibilities as fathers and husbands.

Unstructured questionnaires were appropriate for this research that focused on the personal. The flexibility of the questionnaire and the researcher in terms of dialogue led many interviews with women into areas that respondents deemed topical and important, and these early perspectives shaped future questioning as the fieldwork progressed. A number of people indicated a degree of embarrassment by some of the questions, albeit designed to be as impersonal and inoffensive as possible. As a result I modified or omitted some questions.

Communication with respondents was generally smooth. English is widely spoken and language was not such a barrier that I required an interpreter. A few discussions with older MAP respondents and their wives required some nurturing, yet some of the misunderstandings ended in laughter and helped break the ice. Overall, the majority of dialogue was clear and there was little need to reiterate points or repeat questions.

It is relevant to note that the interviews with urban NGOs and others were less complex. The researcher-researched relationship was on more of a level playing field with these respondents as we shared similarities in worldview, education and philosophy.

***Conclusion***

Despite the practical obstacles identified in undertaking the research, an understanding of these obstacles allows us to appreciate the limitations in carrying out fieldwork in developing country settings. Factoring in a ‘plan B’ revealed itself as a necessary and wise step, although the back up plan resulted in less than desirable data collection from the Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre. The following three chapters of case descriptions and results should be considered in light of the research limitations presented in this chapter.

## **CHAPTER 6 The Case Study: Men as Partners in Reproductive Health – “He Loves, He Cares, He Shares, He’s Always There”<sup>61</sup>**

The male involvement in all areas of development is really important. They have to be trained, informed and empowered. By doing so you will systematically empower the women and the children. We men just have to relocate ourselves [in] the role so that all family members be on line... Who is the leader in the family? In the Pacific Island countries we look up to the fathers to provide that for us. (Project Coordinator, Men as Partners Fiji, July 2004)

### ***Introduction***

This chapter presents the first of the two case studies. It introduces the Men as Partners programme, describing the background, objectives, stakeholders, target audience and project staff, including the profile of project participants who agreed to be interviewed for this thesis. A review of the programme design and content is based on first-hand interviews with staff, male participants and their partners, and programme training and workshop materials.

As the title of this chapter and the opening quote indicates, it will become evident that Men as Partners, in attempting to address taboo subjects such as reproductive health and gender relations, employed a culturally accessible, non-confrontational method for tackling these issues. The programme spoke in terms that its target audience could understand, using Christianity as a ‘way in’ to broach a difficult subject. It can be seen that the Men as Partners pilot project kept within tradition, which ensured it reached the broadest audience possible without ‘rocking the boat’. Whether this *modus operandi* was in line with the basic methodology identified in Chapter Three to achieve gender equitable outcomes is explored further in Chapter Eight.

### ***The Men as Partners (MAP) Fiji story***

The introduction of Men as Partners in the Pacific - that is, bringing men in to the reproductive health and domestic sphere, follows a worldwide trend in the development sector. The project was initiated by the United Nations Population Fund ('UNFPA') who has helped the Fijian government promote family planning policies and services over the past three decades. Historically these policies concentrated on targeting women and children with the odd exception<sup>62</sup> and the participation of men has been marginal. Prevailing gender norms in Fiji has

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<sup>61</sup> The title used in Men as Partners leaflets, posters and training materials.

<sup>62</sup> For example, the UNFPA-funded Vasectomy Project in Fiji and Kiribati. The number of vasectomized men in Kiribati now exceeds the number of sterilized women and the use of condoms has also increased (UNFPA 2000).

also meant that male involvement in anything resembling reproduction and family planning has been considered “unmanly and unacceptable” (Chandra 2000:105; see also Chung 1999). The Men as Partners pilot programme was an attempt to break this mould, broadening traditional female-oriented reproductive policies to encompass mothers *and* fathers. By enhancing male responsibility and encouraging the participation of men in family planning, and cultivating a greater sensitivity among men to gender issues, MAP was considered a critical step for the Fijian government to meet its gender, population and Millennium Development Goals (Reproductive and Family Health Association of Fiji 2000).

Beginning as a three-year pilot project in July 2001, the Fiji programme was initiated as a testing ground for the male-inclusive reproductive health model in the Pacific. The experiences and lessons learnt were to form the basis of regional-wide implementation. Funded by the UNFPA and the New Zealand Agency for International Development (NZAID), the Reproductive Health and Family Association of Fiji (RHFAF) were given the mandate to implement the project on the ground. As a precursor to project implementation, the UNFPA commissioned a baseline study of men and their attitudes to women, family, sexuality and reproduction. This research confirmed that significant gender inequalities exist among a large number of Fijian men, further substantiating the need for the project. Some of the key issues uncovered in the study are outlined in Table 2 overleaf:

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A majority of men in Fiji consider their responsibilities in the family as predominantly instrumental, that is, as breadwinners and providers. This role is underpinned by an ethos of authority, domination, and often distance, to be recognised by children and spouses.</li> <li>2. Many men consider the discipline of spouses and children as a responsibility. This includes physical discipline such as punching and kicking. At the extreme, grievous bodily harm is also justified in the name of discipline.</li> <li>3. Dialogue and conversation about sex and reproduction is uncommon among men, particularly older men living in rural areas.</li> <li>4. Sex is often demanded by men as a right, inside and outside of marriage, to be had at any time desired by them irrespective of their partner's inclinations or desires, and few men consider a female's enjoyment of intimacy.</li> <li>5. Sex and sexuality is framed by tradition and a culture of machismo. The imperative to procreate is a cultural value, and sons are preferred to daughters.</li> <li>6. Condoms are considered a burden and a thwart to pleasure, though condom use is common among married men for extra-marital sex.</li> <li>7. There is limited knowledge of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS.</li> <li>8. Men expect women to bear the responsibility of raising a family, the size of which they consider their right to determine. They want freedom, peace and companionship on their terms with an obsession for respect and support.</li> <li>9. There is hostility from a large number of men towards women's organisations such as the Fiji Women's Rights Centre and the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, both which speak out against domestic violence.</li> <li>10. Men are ultimately constrained by their gender roles and prevailing cultural prejudices.</li> </ol> |
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**Table 2: Summary of Men As Partners Needs Assessment Findings, source: Plange (2000)**

This summary highlights a culture of machismo and male bias which underpins domestic violence, family break-up, and sexual and reproductive health issues, including a lack of communication inter and intra-genders relating to family life and domestic concerns. Yet despite the gender inequalities inherent in these findings, and the general perception that men do not respond to concerns of reproductive health issues (Chandra 2000), the report by Plange (2000:vii) noted widespread support and receptiveness from men for a 'male programme', observing:

There is an enthusiasm in many men to know more about sexuality, reproductive health, family planning and indeed quietly about themselves and sexual urges, their potential reproductive health problems and preventative methods.

Furthermore, Plange (2000) found that a majority of women interviewed were also supportive of a male-targeted programme, including Fiji's most progressive women's organisations, and it was recommended that both the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre and the Fiji Women's Rights Movement provide input at project planning phase.

### ***MAP Programme Goal/Objective***

RHFAF were to base MAP Fiji on other UNFPA-supported 'men as partners' programmes implemented elsewhere around the world.<sup>63</sup> This meant treating men as health clients through the provision of men's contraception, reproductive health care and psycho-social support with male-friendly programmes, services and clinics. However the pilot project was to also "address the gender imbalance which exists in family life in Fiji" (Reproductive and Family Health Association of Fiji 2000). Therefore MAP also sought something *from* men. Participants were expected to share more equally in family planning, domestic and child rearing responsibilities, and decision-making.

A clear directive was that the pilot programme must incorporate gender equitable goals, objectives and implementation, guided by a rights-based approach. In its project proposal, the Reproductive and Family Health Association of Fiji acknowledged the linkages between reproductive health behaviour and gender relations, and that to achieve both, there must be full participation and partnership between men and women.

The overall goal of the MAP Fiji pilot project was to contribute to the improved health of the Fijian population by enhancing the role of men in reproduction health. This goal was to be evaluated against four outputs, listed in Table 3:

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increased awareness of gender issues among men and enhanced non-restrictive gender roles;</li> <li>2. Increased awareness and knowledge among men on reproductive and sexual health and family planning issues;</li> <li>3. Promoted and enhanced communication skills among couples; and</li> <li>4. Established and strengthened reproductive and sexual health services for men.</li> </ol> |
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**Table 3: Men As Partners Fiji Programme Outputs, source: Men as Partners project proposal (Reproductive & Family Health Association of Fiji 2000)**

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<sup>63</sup> Such as those implemented by EngenderHealth, see Chapter Three.

Increasing awareness of gender issues among men encompassed education about the positive effects of gender equality and 'non-restrictive gender roles' on individual well being and family life. It involved promoting alternative male role models and encouraging the active participation and involvement of men in reproductive and sexual health and family planning matters, including family and domestic responsibilities.

Because my research was primarily concerned with the programme's approach to addressing gender equality, and its efficacy in achieving this, I focused on the first output, that is, increasing awareness of gender issues among men and 'non-restrictive gender roles'. However some clarity was required on what the term 'non-restrictive gender roles' meant. Yet the definition of 'non-restrictive gender roles' was ambiguous. Nowhere in the project documentation was a discussion of what this term specifically entailed, therefore 'non-restrictive gender roles' was open to interpretation. In interview for this thesis, the project coordinator offered his definition:

Non-restrictive gender roles means gender roles that are not restricted to males only. The point is that men can do women's jobs and vice-versa, especially in the home.

This interpretation by the coordinator did mirror a brief comment in the project proposal, which stated that under the first output, that is, "increased awareness on gender issues among men and enhanced non-restrictive gender roles", the project seeks to promote:

... the benefits of the active participation and involvement of men in reproductive health, sexual health and family planning matters, and supporting and sharing in family and domestic responsibilities.

However it appears that non-restrictive gender roles meant more than men pro-actively participating in sexual and reproductive matters, raising their children and helping more in the home. The official indicator for testing the success of this first output was a decrease in reported cases of domestic violence from Police statistics, the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, the Ministry of Health and MAP clinic records.<sup>64</sup> This suggests a more specific meaning. Hence for the purposes of this thesis, the definition is employed to mean 'non-traditional gender roles', encompassing the promotion of activities traditionally deemed 'feminine' such as child rearing, domestic responsibilities, and sexual and reproductive health matters and the eradication of traditional male gender norms, such as violence, domination, and non-communication.

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<sup>64</sup> This information was unavailable for this research. To gauge the impact the project had on attitudes and frequency of domestic violence, empirical evidence was constructed from the programme's information, education and communication materials, interviews with staff, beneficiaries and their partners, and discussions with stakeholders, including several NGOs who were consulted in the initial project planning phase.

### ***Stakeholders***

Pre-project consultation was undertaken with stakeholders, which meant that the project had backing from a range of influential relevant organisations and individuals from its inception. This was a critical part of the project process, as community and political support and commitment to project goals by primary and secondary stakeholders is vital to the success of any project, especially those that deal with the delicate issues of gender, sex and reproduction.

Meetings with local stakeholders in March 2000 formed part of initial project scoping to determine goals, key outputs and activities of the pilot. Included in this two-day consultation process were representatives from the Ministry of Health and NGOs working within the gender equality and sexual and reproductive health fields. The latter group included the Fiji Women's Rights Movement, the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, Women's Action for Change and the AIDS Taskforce Fiji. Other participants included the Fiji Rugby Union, the Vatukoula Emperor Gold Mine and the Fiji Military Forces.

In order to address the concerns of a range of women's groups, including those involved in the initial planning meeting, it was agreed that increasing male participation in sexual and reproductive health should not detract from the sustained efforts to improve the status of women. Rather, the programme

... should enhance communication within relationships and foster shared responsibility for the reproductive health process, which in term should serve to contribute to gains in gender equity (Reproductive and Family Health Association of Fiji 2000).

### ***Participants/Target Audience***

The latter two stakeholders were identified as key sites for the pilot project as they constituted concentrated groups of at-risk men. The Fiji Military Forces is a large operation of 3000 soldiers. Initial focus groups indicated that military employees lacked basic information on reproductive health, sexual health and family planning issues. Coupled with the consideration that military, and uniformed personnel in general, run a high-risk of contracting, and transmitting, sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS, the Fiji Military Forces were seen as a priority target audience. Infection rates among the armed forces, for example, are between two and five times higher than among the general population, increasing in times of conflict (UNAIDS 1998). The military also possess a culture that tends to accept, and even encourage, sexual risk-taking, and soldiers in deployment are known to regularly engage in sexual contact with sex workers. This behaviour renders these men especially vulnerable to sexually

transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancies (UNFPA 2003). High levels of stress and divorce also accompany the job as employees are required to spend long periods offshore. These specific vulnerabilities within the military culture often impact female co-workers, and their spouses, families and communities back home. Preliminary focus groups with the Fiji military indicated that among their main issues were stress, high divorce rates and domestic violence. Their greatest needs were anger management training and counselling, including psychotherapy.

A similar captive audience was to be found within the employee base of the Emperor Gold Mine, a large foreign-owned rural company of around 1700 staff, predominantly ethnic Fijian males. The mine is situated in northwest Viti Levu, encompassing the community of Vatukoula and neighbouring areas Tavua, Ba and Rakiraki (see map of study area on page 66). Again, initial focus groups indicated a lack of basic knowledge about reproductive health, sexual health and family planning issues, and a need for anger management training and counselling. The focus groups also confirmed Plange's (2000:iv) findings of the urgent need for information outside urban regions. Sex and reproduction are not acceptable topics for conversation in Fiji, particularly in rural settings, as poor sexual health and domestic crises are exacerbated by a general reticence by people to discuss private matters with anyone, for fear of being judged and for fear of gossip.<sup>65</sup>

Emperor Gold Mine management agreed to the establishment of a MAP office, also known as a 'male drop-in centre', at the site of the company's health clinic, and for the office to be the focal point of information and education, including counselling and the distribution of condoms. The mine also allowed MAP counsellors to talk at regular morning staff induction sessions, enabling MAP to engage directly with their target audience. In addition, the company's community radio service was offered to MAP free of charge for education and awareness programmes.

Both the Fiji Military Forces and the Emperor Gold Mine provided a unique opportunity to access large groups of men in need of counselling in an organised environment, and in the case of the military, a highly disciplined setting. In terms of men and their decision to participate in the project, workshops were held on a voluntary first-come-first-served basis. Several male

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<sup>65</sup> In interviews for this thesis, gossip was considered a negative attribute, characteristic of the culture, and inherent among both males and females. One of the more educated Fijian women remarked, "men here in Fiji are like fishermen's wives, they gossip incessantly", and the wife of one of the MAP counsellors commented, "[gossip] is something about the culture that a lot of people do in Fiji. Also the men". A story by a staff member at the MAP clinic in Vatukoula illustrates the insidious level of gossip and myth surrounding sex: "There was a girl in Tavua who was a Fijian Institute of Technology student whom everyone thought had HIV/AIDS because she used to go to Ba. They didn't know she was going there for school, and so everyone was spreading a myth about this girl. I was surprised that people believed this. I told people that you can't know she has AIDS unless she has a blood test. People thought she was going to Ba to work as a prostitute!". See also comments about gossip as a method of social control and censure by Sue Carswell (in Leckie 2002:171).

participants were also handpicked by senior army personnel on the basis of their suitability and receptiveness to the project and their track record of leadership in the workplace and in their communities. The idea behind the identification and recruitment of these men was to ensure the ongoing dissemination of ideas and information beyond the workshops and project cycle.

#### Profile of Respondents for the Men as Partners Interviews

The methodology chapter described the problems associated with accessing programme participants to interview. However I had the opportunity to talk to men from both the Fiji Military Forces and the Emperor Gold Mine, and I acquired a sample, albeit limited, of 13 male participants and eight partners. Three of these men were peer educators who actively promoted the project in Suva and in Vatukoula, voluntarily giving talks at village and church meetings, distributing leaflets, and handing out condoms.

The backgrounds of men who participated in this research varied. All but one respondent were ethnic Fijian. The non-Fijian was a Rotuman<sup>66</sup>. Ages of those interviewed ranged from 19 to 56, with a median age of 34. Eleven of these men were married, one was twice divorced, and one, the youngest respondent, claimed he had a girlfriend. Of the eleven, I was able to interview eight women - seven partners and one mother. Five of the eleven respondents were in a second marriage. The reason given for re-marrying for four of these men was a deceased first wife. Of the eleven married men, all had children. The average number of children in participants' families was four.

Six participants were Emperor Gold Mine employees living in rural Vatukoula, and seven worked for the Fiji Military Forces, based in urban Suva. All but one of the programme participants were in paid employment, either with the Emperor Gold Mine or the Fiji Military Forces. The individual in unpaid employment was a 19 year old who had been working 'on attachment' at the gold mine<sup>67</sup>.

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<sup>66</sup> Rotumans originate from the island of Rotuma and constitute a recognised minority group within Fiji at approximately 1.2% of the population. They are distinct in terms of culture and appearance, more closely resembling the Polynesian peoples of Tonga and Samoa more so than Fiji.

<sup>67</sup> Several informants explained that 'attachment' is unpaid work in the hope of securing paid employment. The practice of 'attachment' is widespread and is criticised as being exploitative, particularly given the high rate of unemployment and substandard living conditions in the mining region of Vatukoula. The male in question had been working on attachment for two years at EGM. Another 'employee' I spoke with, a receptionist at the health clinic, had also been working for 'free' for a similar period. The labour exploits and poor working conditions at the foreign-owned Emperor Gold Mine have been critiqued elsewhere (Emberson-Bain & Slatter 1995) including newspaper reports at the time of fieldwork, for example "State, Mine 'share blame on job loss' in *The Fiji Times*, Wednesday 7 July 2004.

Job descriptions varied. Six of the seven military employees were sergeants, and the seventh was a nurse working in the military hospital. The sergeants were all required to spend intermittent periods in Lebanon or East Timor, where the Fiji Military Forces have a significant presence. The registered nurse was based in Suva. Five out of the six research participants at the gold mine were employed as manual labourers, working in the mine itself. The sixth was a payroll officer in administration.

For most, one job did not provide enough financial resources to live comfortably. Nine out of the 13 beneficiaries relied on secondary income to meet their expenses, including income from their spouses. Additional income for six of these respondents included family-run businesses administered from home, such as renting films, running a 'canteen', money lending, and working on a plantation. Three respondents, all from Suva, said they relied on their spouses' income, which included flower arranging, nursing and cleaning. From observations made from eight interviews in private homes, two in Vatukoula and six in Suva, families appeared relatively comfortable in terms material possessions, despite relying on dual incomes. All eight homes had a television, radio and VCR or DVD player, and were adequately furnished and equipped. Houses however were fully occupied, with an average of eight inhabitants per household consisting of nuclear and extended family, including mothers, mothers-in-law, nieces, and nephews. These large, extended family living arrangements are typical in Fiji, as in other Pacific Islands.

All respondents identified themselves as Christian. Eighty percent categorised themselves as Methodist, one of the two biggest Christian religious groups in Fiji (Fiji Bureau of Statistics 1996). Other Christian affiliates were Assembly of God and Christian Mission Fellowship. All but one respondent claimed to be practising their faith. Two respondents from Vatukoula and one from Suva also claimed to be pastors.

Five out of the six gold mine employees in Vatukoula were aware of the male drop-in clinic from visiting the general practitioner at the health centre, and one learnt about the project through a morning induction session, held regularly for new employees at the goldmine. The military participants were informed about MAP through internal staff communication promoting the opportunity to participate in a MAP workshop.

### ***Staff and Training***

The New Zealand Family Planning Association's International Development agency (FPAID) was responsible for the overall management and execution of the programme, with technical support available from the Fijian Ministry of Health. Locally, the Reproductive and Family

Health Association of Fiji (RHFAF) was granted the contract for implementation. This was done in the spirit of capacity building and expanding and strengthening local service delivery and supply. Based in Suva, RFHAF subcontracted individuals and organisations for various components of the project, for example, the appointment of a project coordinator, and the conscription of non-government organisations like Women's Action for Change, who were used to assist MAP with outreach services such as community dramas and talks<sup>68</sup>.

The individual recruited for the role of project coordinator was an active Methodist leader in his forties. He was married with children and possessed significant experience in sexual and reproductive health service delivery, along with a wide network of industry contacts. The coordinator was retained by RFHAF to administer the programme at project level, and he also had a key role in the design of the programme based on a brief by the New Zealand Family Planning Association. The project coordinator produced the majority of the programme content.

MAP staff were recruited by the coordinator. All staff, paid and voluntary, including peer counsellors, were males of ethnic Fijian origin. The project coordinator said in my first interview with him that he insisted on using males as "men want men to talk to...we need men to deliver the message to men", and that in Fiji "men won't listen to women about these issues. They only listen to men". Others support this perspective. A local religious leader observed that in his sermons from the pulpit, hearing about issues "from men ... for us men" carries more weight than when "our wives talk to us about failures, it becomes difficult to swallow" (FWCC 2004c). This view has been echoed by others working in the gender and development field, and is arguably an appropriate culturally sensitive approach<sup>69</sup>.

The recruitment of male staff was coupled with another requirement, and that was the employment of men with Christian values, as the coordinator explained:

The person delivering the programme has to be a person who believes in right and wrong....You have to impose good values... Fijian's goals are Christian... [So] I go on what they value... MAP is not only about health.

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<sup>68</sup> Women's Action for Change is a drama group who employs six actors and a coordinator. It has been involved in outreach work on reproductive and sexual health issues using playback participatory theatre in schools and prisons in Fiji. Women's Action for Change claim that the method of 'playback' ensures high success rates communicating difficult and sensitive concepts to various audiences.

<sup>69</sup> Kamla Bhasin (1997) asserts that in patriarchal cultures where women are not afforded the same respect as men, there are limitations of women working with men in the gender field. Keating (2004:62) suggests that complications can arise with the use of female facilitators who may be cornered in to forming "bargains" between themselves and male participants, and workshops then run the risk of being "hijacked and of showmanship without commitment to gender equality". It is fair to say however that commitment to equality is one important characteristic of gender work, with men and women, which can never be guaranteed.

The project coordinator was one of three paid staff members of the pilot project interviewed for this thesis. The other two employees were responsible for the MAP clinic at the Emperor Gold Mine. One was a Methodist church minister in his late fifties, and the other was a high-school educated 20-year old who was also an active Methodist. MAP employed both men in 2002. However by the time I undertook fieldwork they were working in a voluntary capacity due to the cessation of the pilot project as funding came to a close in July 2004.

A key requirement in the MAP contract was the training of project staff in counselling and the promotion of "non-restrictive gender roles" as defined earlier. This included the analysis of gender norms in workshops on gender issues and violence. Since staff were required to conduct workshops on gender issues and domestic violence with project stakeholders, they were expected to have a sound understanding of the links between sexual and reproductive health, violence and gender inequality. To assist with this, training materials on gender issues, reproductive and sexual health, family planning and counselling and communication were developed in the form of manuals, pamphlets and brochures (see Appendices Two and Three for examples). Again these materials were designed with input and final authorisation of the project coordinator.

The research found that a portion of the staff training was inconsistent with programme goals. Staff appeared to possess a good grasp of the principles of counselling. The two counsellors at the MAP clinic at the gold mine displayed empathy and understanding of sexual and reproductive health issues and a general knowledge of their clients' domestic context. Both men demonstrated a natural counselling and mentoring ability. On gender issues however, training appeared weak, verified by the lack of gender analysis in programme content and feedback from staff and participants. These two points are discussed in this next section.

### ***Programme Content***

The contents of the programme varied from biological sexual and reproductive health issues to relationship dynamics within marriage. An outline of the curriculum used for these workshops is presented in Table 4.

<b>Sexuality and Reproduction</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Virtues</li> <li>○ Sex roles, Gender roles</li> <li>○ Self esteem</li> <li>○ HIV life cycle – the potential killer for the unfaithful</li> <li>○ Conception, Pregnancy and Childbirth</li> <li>○ Male and Female Reproductive System and Functions, Menstruation, Contraception</li> <li>○ Male infertility, Erectile Dysfunction/Impotence</li> </ul>
<b>Couple Communication</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Communication with spouse and children</li> <li>○ Five secrets how women communicate – the unique way which women communicate to help men understand their spouses better.</li> <li>○ Top ten communication habits of men that make women crazy – the unique ways which men communicate that may confuse and annoy women.</li> <li>○ Communication, Sex and Money</li> </ul>
<b>Family</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Small Team Leadership – Father and Mother</li> <li>○ Husbands practising the Virtues of Love and Leadership – MAP's cornerstone of 'male responsibility'</li> <li>○ Love</li> <li>○ Teenage Pregnancy, Extra-marital affairs</li> <li>○ Self-inflicted financial poverty (poverty alleviation)</li> <li>○ Culture of Dating</li> </ul>
<b>Gender Issues</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Gender stereotypes that disadvantage sexual health – gender socialisation in childhood and its influence on sexual health and relationships.</li> <li>○ Act like Women, Act like Men – 'masculine sons, feminine daughters'.</li> <li>○ Husbands responsibility for gender harmony</li> <li>○ Needs you should know about your spouse</li> <li>○ Understanding the differences (male/female, husband/wife) – biological, physical, emotional, social and sexual differences.</li> <li>○ Seven myths men believe about women that cause marital breakdown</li> <li>○ Types of lies – the lies men and women tell, some healthy, some unhealthy</li> <li>○ Midlife Crisis</li> <li>○ Women's sacred relationship with time</li> </ul>

Table 4: Contents of the Men As Partners Workshops<sup>70</sup>

Source: Men as Partners workshop materials (unpublished)

In order to sensitise men to reproductive health concerns, the programme content incorporated basic biological reproductive information, including modules on contraception and sexual and fertility problems. These topics appeared to be well covered and well received by the target group. Staff attributed this success to the way in which MAP was custom-designed for a Fijian audience, that is, discussing sexual and reproductive health matters in a Christian context. The coordinator believed that in Fiji, sex and reproduction must be framed in overtly Christian terms so that men and women would accept the importance of openly discussing the issues.

To facilitate awareness of gender inequalities and increase men's knowledge of behaviours impacting the health of their partners and themselves, the programme was also required to

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<sup>70</sup> The list has been adapted from the MAP workshop booklet and topics were not categorised in this specific sequence. However I took the liberty of adapting it for ease of explanation.

advocate women's rights. However, an analysis of MAP's information and education materials and interviews with staff and participants proved that concepts incorporating women's rights were not welcome. In a later interview with the coordinator, I was told that a gender equality philosophy was deemed inappropriate for Fijian men and women. The coordinator believed that there are "fundamental gaps between men and women", and due to these 'gaps' men make better leaders in every sphere of life, as the quote at the beginning of this chapter makes clear. The theme of male dominance and female subordination was therefore evident in the majority of topics covered in the MAP workshops, and there appeared to be little effort to close the 'gaps' between men and women.

Although this approach ran counter to the methodology required of the project from donors, interviews suggested that the programme had a positive impact. Men, and their partners, found Men as Partners valuable in educating them about, and encouraging dialogue on, the taboo issues of sex and sexuality, and improving relationships and family dynamics. These points resonated in my interviews, as the following subsections explain<sup>71</sup>.

### **Sexuality and Reproduction**

The uncomfortable topic of sexuality and reproduction was addressed in a "wholesome way" which the coordinator and staff believed was the only way Fijian men and women on the whole could identify with. This is why a discussion on 'Virtues' was included in the MAP curriculum and the topic of contraception was very carefully dealt with. The "Virtues" concept is borrowed from an international programme called the Virtues Project. Virtues are underpinned by five basic strategies: compassion and honesty; changing power struggles and violent behaviour into harmonious relationships; honouring the spirit in finding meaning and purpose; and offering the art of spiritual companionship<sup>72</sup>. These strategies are in line with project objectives to alleviate male power and improve relationships. Coupled with the multi-dimensional nature of sexuality, the decision to incorporate the 'Virtues' and a discussion on self-esteem in to the module on 'sexuality and reproduction' was arguably a sound, holistic approach.

Contraception was said to have 'come from God' for people's protection, but more emphasis was placed on abstinence and faithfulness as the key ingredients in safeguarding people's health. Staff and participants alike articulated the view that condoms were not 'Fijian', and I learnt that the unofficial stance adopted by staff was to decrease demand for these items by emphasising abstinence and faithfulness in the name of 'traditional' Fijian values.

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<sup>71</sup> The structure of these sections mirrors the format of the programme content in Table 4.

<sup>72</sup> See the Virtues Project website [www.virtuesproject.org.nz](http://www.virtuesproject.org.nz).

### Couple Communication

In real estate business, it's location, location, location. In marriage, it's communication, communication, communication (MAP workshop manual)

The emphasis Men as Partners placed on increasing communication between spouses and family members addressed a fundamental aspect of sexual and reproductive health, in line with studies show that spousal communication is integral to more equitable family planning (Sternberg 1999; Blanc 2001). This is because the absence of dialogue between couples in many developing country settings is underpinned by gender inequality. For example, fear of causing conflict and violence (Rutenberg and Watkins 1997, Biddlecom and Fapohunda 1998 in Blanc 2001) or the sheer embarrassment of discussing sex with their partners. Encouraging men and women to talk about sex was brave given its taboo nature among Fijians (Kaitani 2000; Plange 2000; Vete 2003). Yet out of all items on the programme schedule, feedback from key informants indicated that couple communication was interesting and relevant for participants, and had the most impact in terms of positive relationship change.

Clinic records indicated a strong demand for counselling for relationship difficulties in the workplace and at home. This demand came from both men and women. MAP's communication messages focused on the distinct ways in which men and women 'dialogue' and the need for men to practice intimate communication at home with their spouse and children. The coordinator said the military workshops stressed the importance of 'separating work from home' in authority and communication.

An improvement in this area was reported by all but one male and female interviewed. A 45 year old male from the military shared the following:

"[the] biggest lesson [I've learnt is] you have to talk and find out what's the reason and problem, and how you solve it. My wife, I didn't used to listen to her. She would keep problems inside, and I would talk all the time, I wouldn't give her time to explain. Recently she wrote all the problems on a piece of paper. Now we talk about things, I give her time to talk. Learning to communicate has been the best thing about [MAP]".

Learning that there are other ways of operating at home other than giving orders was welcomed by many of the FMF interviewees who were accustomed to a military style of communicating. One male participant from the FMF commented, "we are doing more conversation and sharing, it's more two-way", and two others explained,

Since I've been participating [in MAP], we have come to sit together. But before that we didn't. Before, she'd ask me a question and I'll say we'll do this, like I do at work. But now we talk through things.

In army life we're tough, and we shouldn't be giving orders to wife and kids at home. I found out this was wrong. Maintaining discipline from camp and bringing home. We should be civilians at home. A father and a husband not an officer.

Females felt that their husbands listened to them considerably more than prior to their involvement with MAP. A wife of an FMF employee, whose husband I was unable to interview, admitted that since the programme her husband behaves more "gentlemanly" and listens to her and makes her "feel better". Another wife commented that one of the best aspects of MAP was that "it's got men and women talking".

There were also indications of an increase in affection within the marital relationships of participants. Three of the women observed this change and one of the younger wives from Vatukoula remarked:

He's loving our kids more, loves me more, is more affectionate. MAP is good. It's helped us a lot. We are more equal emotionally.

One male in his 50s, who admitted showing more verbal and physical affection to his wife, shared the following:

We used to wait, we used to put off the light, and then we would say, "I love you darling". But it has to be done in front of the children. Everywhere you do it. You just do it. What is stopping you from doing it? And people say when they see you, they say, hey hey, look at them.

This is a noteworthy change in behaviour, as publicly displaying feelings among couples is taboo in Fiji, as entrenched social controls inhibit couples from exhibiting affection. Therefore it was a courageous step for this Fijian male.

MAP promoted good communication as being indicative of a strong Christian marriage, combining both agape<sup>73</sup> and romantic love. A slide from the MAP training manual reminds participants "God writes your love story". MAP's number one rule for healthy sexual and reproductive lives and a 'gender equitable' relationship is that 'love language' is important in bridging the gap of understanding between men and women. The importance weighted toward communication is evident in the training manual, which included five modules addressing communication, including: day-to-day communication between spouses and parents and

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<sup>73</sup> 'Agape' love means "love of God".

children; "secrets to how women communicate", which attempts to engage men in the 'female world' of communication and broaden the understanding between husbands and wives; "top ten communication habits of men that make women crazy"; a module on communication, sex and money; and a module on the 'helpful and not-so-helpful' lies that men tell.<sup>74</sup>

## Family

### Fatherhood

The theme of 'fatherhood' was a central component in MAP's training and workshops. It was clear through my discussions, particularly with men, that many fathers are enthusiastic about improving their parenting roles. Interviews were dominated by discussions on fatherhood, and men expressed desire to be more loving, communicating fathers, and parenting in general was a recurring theme in interviews with both men and their partners.

The research found that men considered spending more time with their children as key to a happier family, and there were signs that men were learning new ways to be a 'man'. Men were learning that it was okay to be emotional and nurturing, helped by MAP who promoted this broader role by encouraging men to be more active parents. This is articulated in the training manual quoted in Table 5:

- Fathers should raise their children with tenderness, sympathy, compassion, responsiveness, warmth, kindness
- Listen to them and respect their feeling
- If you have wrong them admit it to them
- Listen to the input of wife gives about the child
- Be high touch and give liberal doses of encouragement to both sons and daughters

Table 5 – 'Fathering' slide from MAP trainer's manual

The programme's emphasis on being a better father encouraged participants to form closer bonds with their children, be more present, and share more information with their sons and daughters. For example, in the last section of the MAP manual is a section headed "One Women Kind of Man, Masculine Sons and Feminine Daughters" addressing love and faithfulness and fatherhood within marriage, including advice on better fatherhood with tips on how to raise children. The emphasis is on love and presence, and eight of the 13 male respondents said they now appreciate the value in spending more time with the family. A respondent from the gold mine said that now he "makes near to wife and kids", whereas previously he refused to see the benefits in being more available to them. Women also observed their partners changes in attitudes towards their children. Wives agreed that there was an increase in dialogue between

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<sup>74</sup> These modules were based on three American publications: *Relationship Rescue* by Dr. P.C. McGraw, *What Women want Men to Know* by Barbara Dangelis, and *Communication, Sex and Money* by Ed Cole.

their husbands and children. This made them more happy, as one said “I am more happy to see him interacting more with his kids”.

### **Pro-active Husbands**

Encouraging the active participation and involvement of men in domestic responsibilities was a programme objective, and there was evidence that this took place in the families of those I spoke with. MAP celebrated the domestic “queen” as one male put it. The promotional poster for Men as Partners, produced in both Fijian and English, consists of a photo depicting a young woman cooking and her partner doing the dishes, with the words “He Loves, He Cares, He Shares, He’s Always There” (see Appendix Three). A smaller pamphlet in English depicts a father in military uniform, handing his daughter a bowl of food. A smiling mother and a younger sibling stand by observing this interaction (see Appendix Two). The following Table illustrates the importance MAP placed on women’s unpaid role of mother and homemaker:

<b>Housewife has come to symbolise:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unfulfilment</li> <li>• Inferiority</li> <li>• Insignificance</li> </ul>
How unfortunate! We can make no greater mistake than to devalue the importance of the home and the sustenance which children should be given there

- Unfulfilment
  - Inferiority
  - Insignificance
- How unfortunate! We can make no greater mistake than to devalue the importance of the home and the sustenance which children should be given there

Table 6 – ‘Housewife’ - slide from Men as Partners trainer’s manual

Men claimed that they helped more with domestic jobs “like dishes, washing, and cooking”, and that “after project I realise [family jobs] are a shared responsibility”. Anecdotal feedback from the military hospital in Suva even indicated that men were changing diapers, a typically female task. Hospital staff believed this to be a result of the MAP workshops with the FMF.

Women also claimed that their husbands were taking a more proactive role, sharing the cooking of meals, doing the dishes and helping with other chores such as the laundry, and engaging with the children, for example, taking an interest in their school work. Although they still bore the brunt of these responsibilities, women felt they didn’t have to “nag” their partners to help, and although many of them still had to ask, their husbands were less inclined to ignore their requests, or worse, abuse them.

### **Gender Issues**

However, running in counter to these statements, I was disturbed to witness the endorsement of male authority, even though this was dependent on the proviso that men respect and love their partners, and based on interpretations of the Christian bible. The latter is summed up by one of the younger participants, “the Bible says that the leader of the family is God, the leader of a

woman is a man. But a guy should respect a woman". Table 7 is an excerpt from the MAP manual that supports the ethos of the male leader role:

<b>Wife's responsibility</b>	<b>Husband's responsibility</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support</li> <li>• Love</li> <li>• Respect</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Love</li> <li>• Lead</li> </ul>
<b>Mom's responsibility</b>	<b>Dad's responsibility</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lover of children</li> <li>• Homebuilder</li> <li>• Teacher of children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manager</li> <li>• Minister</li> <li>• Role Model</li> </ul>

Table 7 – The Responsibilities of Men and Women - slide from Men as Partners trainer's manual

The coordinator observed that he stresses to men that "if your wife is willing to bear your name and children, then you must be willing to bear responsibility of providing for her and them, identification that is valuable to the worth of their own beings".

Therefore although the word 'gender' was used through the workshops often enough, the interpretation of 'gender' was that of very demarcated traditional roles for women and men.

### ***Conclusion***

Analysis of the Men as Partners programme based on programme materials and feedback from participants and their partners indicated the project brought about positive change for men and their partners including improving paternal relationships with children. However the Christian dimension was at once the programme's strength and weakness. For example, there were some problems in terms of the execution of gender issues, which, while done in a culturally appropriate manner, contravened project objectives in terms of sensitising men to gender equality and eradicating gender violence. Second, there appeared an inherent bias towards working with ethnic Fijians, at the exclusion of Indo-Fijians. The programme's American-Christian flavour attracted far more ethnic Fijian participants, arguably putting off many potential Indo-Fijian men.

Chapter Seven now turns the contrasting case study, the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre's male advocacy programme, whose differences in philosophy and methodology are strikingly evident.

## CHAPTER 7 The Contrast: Men as partners in women's rights: The Fiji Women's Crisis Centre

A lot of people argue that Fiji isn't ready for this kind of approach, that it is too soon for feminism, but when will we ever be ready? (Key informant from Suva-based NGO)

### ***Introduction***

The previous chapter reviewed the Men as Partners pilot programme focusing on the project content and approach and responses of project participants. This chapter turns to the second case study, the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC). FWCC is a non-governmental organisation that also works with groups of men specifically addressing gender violence<sup>75</sup>. The Crisis Centre was described by one of the research participants interviewed for this thesis as "MAP's key competition". This chapter describes the content and methods deployed by the FWCC in its work with men.

### ***The FWCC Story***

The Fiji Women's Crisis Centre is a social service organisation aimed primarily at counselling women and children who are victims of abuse and violence. It opened in Suva in 1984 as a response to the concerns of a group of expatriate women about the prevalence of sexual assaults in Fiji. At that time there was nowhere for women as victims of violence to go, and no one to advocate on behalf of women experiencing gender violence. Although the women's movement had begun to make some headway at this stage, women's issues were limited to a small, educated, urban set, and had very low status on the political agenda, to the extent that domestic violence was tacitly condoned by government, including the justice system, and largely ignored by local communities, despite traditional means of dealing with violent marital disputes (Aucoin 1990). Violence was therefore underreported, and only a very small portion of battered women sought help from the police.

Since its beginnings in 1984, the FWCC has become a symbol of resistance against gender-based violence. Its core work is counselling and support for women, the need for which has grown exponentially since opening. In the first year of operation there were a total of eight new cases. This figure increased nearly ten fold in 1985, and in 2004 (up to October) the FWCC

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<sup>75</sup> To the author's knowledge, apart from the Men as Partners programme, the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre is the only other organisation to run a programme specifically addressing men about gender issues *per se*. Outside of Fiji, and with the help of the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, the Vanuatu Women's Centre and the Solomon Islands Family Support Centre have recently embarked on programmes with men addressing violence against women. These programmes are based on the model developed by FWCC for their Male Advocacy workshops.

handled 1066 new cases of domestic violence, rape, sexual harassment, child abuse and related problems.<sup>76</sup>

Their initial mandate to provide crisis work to women as victims of sexual assault has developed to include an agenda and activities that address all forms of violence against women and children, such as child abuse, domestic violence, and sexual harassment in the workplace, using mass media campaigns to highlight these issues. The FWCC also provide legal aid for women, public advocacy and education on gender violence, lobbying for legislative reform, and research into domestic violence in Fiji and other Pacific Island countries.

Although FWCC has primarily focused on providing crisis assistance for women and children, they have had ongoing contact with men in a service provider capacity. Although this has not been part of their core mandate, FWCC feel they "have to include men because they have problems also and they have come to us" (Ali 2004). Since 2000, the Centre has counselled more than 500 men who have approached the organisation for various personal problems. Ali said that the FWCC counsellors take them through anger management and other areas of need if they can provide that.

The organisation's community education and public advocacy efforts are held through regular talks at the community level among schools, kindergartens, villages, church groups and other women's groups, such as the Catholic Women's League, the Fiji Muslim Women's League, and the Methodist-based Soqosoqo Vakamaraga. Domestic violence, sexual harassment, gender and child abuse issues are discussed with a wide audience, including children, women and men. In an effort to prompt youth to reflect on violence, FWCC ran a secondary school essay competition. Winning essays were published with writing and reflections from local women, including clients of FWCC, in *Breaking the Silence* (1998). There is also a public library at the Suva office.

The FWCC also run workshops for NGOs, government institutions, medical personnel, and church workers. They are geared towards training women who wish to work in counselling and crisis support. Sexual harassment-in-the-workplace talks are frequently given to large employers and trade unions. Regular programmes on radio stations in Fijian, Hindi and English, highlight violence against women and children and human and women's rights, including a weekly bulletin on Fiji's mainstream radio station, *Bula FM*.

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<sup>76</sup> Statistics of cases referred to the FWCC are available from [www.fijiwomen.com/statistics/new\\_category.htm](http://www.fijiwomen.com/statistics/new_category.htm).

Since 1987 FWCC has organised high profile public campaigns to raise awareness among the general public of women's and human rights. Some activities are part of global campaigns, such as 'Reclaim the Night' marches to mark International Women's Day on 8 March, and the '16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence', which runs from 23 November through to 10 December, ending on the anniversary of World Human Rights Day. FWCC has increasingly raised the visibility of these campaigns with advertising supplements in local newspapers, and radio and television advertising. This year 300 women, children and men participated in the Reclaim the Night march.

FWCC has developed a strong reputation and profile in Fiji and beyond for their efforts in changing attitudes and laws about gender and violence in the Pacific. They influenced the Fiji Police force to account for domestic violence cases separately from general assault cases (FWCC 2001:2). At the regional level, they coordinate the Pacific Women's Network Against Violence Against Women, in which nine other Pacific Island countries participate, and provides advice to other women's crisis centres in the Pacific.<sup>77</sup> Lobbying for the reform of laws that discriminate against women is now a focal point for the FWCC as their experience in dealing with victims of violence since 1984 has strengthened their position of expertise on violence and family relations in the Pacific. They played a central role in the petitioning of the recently implemented Family Law Bill<sup>78</sup>, and assisted in drafting the Domestic Violence Law Reform Bill, helping the Law Reform Commission model new legislation based on their own research.

This research includes two significant studies highlighting the endemic nature of gender-based violence in Fiji. Their research (2001a) on the May 2001 coup in Fiji examined the extent of social and economic repercussions on women as a result of civil and political unrest, such as job loss, pay cuts, fear, insecurity, sexual assaults, suicide, domestic abuse, family tensions, land issues and emotional trauma (Fiji Women's Crisis Centre 2001). The study also reveals an unprecedented level of violence among male law enforcers, and lists a lengthy inventory of crimes committed by male police officers around the occurrence of the coup.

The other major piece of research (2001) describes the frequency of domestic violence and sexual assault in Fiji, particularly the nature and extent of gender violence in the home (cf. Aucoin 1990; Adinkrah 1995, 2001). This national survey revealed that 66% of women surveyed by the FWCC had been beaten by their husbands or other male family members.

<sup>77</sup> For example, the FWCC assumed a 'managing agent' role for the new Vanuatu Women's Centre in 1999.

<sup>78</sup> The Family Law Bill took effect on 1 January 2005. It provides for the recognition of women's non-financial contribution in a marriage, where wives are now eligible for a share of matrimonial property in the case of divorce, and economic value is prescribed to women's unpaid work by stipulating an equal share of property. The Bill also allots equal opportunity for parental custodial rights to both spouses, and redefines the term "family" to include *de facto* relationships.

Tolerance of domestic violence is high, and women themselves are conditioned to believe that violence is justified under certain circumstances, namely ‘disobedience’ by women, flirting and adultery (FWCC 2001:iv). Part of the report’s recommendations was the need for more community education programmes and campaigns aimed at men on the promotion of non-violence and conflict resolution. Another recommendation was for the Centre to work more closely with the police force, particularly older and higher-ranking male officers, and for police officers to participate in anger management and conflict resolution training. These recommendations paved the way for the development of another men’s programme, for the Centre had previously attempted to address men as early as 1995 in a campaign themed ‘Real Men Don’t Hit Women’ which was unsuccessful in achieving the impact and scope desired. This was partly due to the difficulty in identifying appropriate, gender sensitive men to “lead by example”<sup>79</sup> and the sheer complexity and enormity of promoting behaviour change in a critical mass of men for whom gender violence is a social norm. However in November 2002 the FWCC’s recommendations to work with men in an advocacy role were realised with their first male training programme.

### ***FWCC Programme Goal/Objective***

The key purpose of this training was to prepare a select group of men to work as advocates among other men to end violence against women. The first “Men’s Program Against Violence Against Women” involved a two-week workshop with men from different sections of government, churches, military, police and NGOs. Topics covered gender awareness, defining and analysing the dynamics of violence against women, and exploring men’s attitudes toward women and violence. The programme opened during the 2002 ‘16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence’ campaign and was well publicised across the media, aimed at all religious and ethnic men. TV ads were produced featuring men ethnic and Indo-Fijian men speaking out against violence, pamphlets targeted at men were distributed, as well as bumper stickers condemning violence. Since 2002, FWCC have conducted regular workshops for the military and police on gender issues, violence against women and human rights.

### ***Stakeholders***

Like Men as Partners, FWCC consulted with a number of players in a public forum with Government, trade unions, churches, media representatives, NGOs, and organisations such as

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<sup>79</sup> The importance of identifying influential male role models is an important strategy employed by many organisations working with men (Lang 2002:18). In this case, finding men of integrity to front the campaign was described as “virtually impossible” by the FWCC. Apart from looking at high profile sporting heroes, of whom “no one seemed to fit the bill”, the FWCC sourced their role models from secondary schools commenting that male youth were less likely to be ‘schooled’ in traditional gender modes of thinking. The lack of positive, gender sensitive male role models was also stated by the Fiji Women’s Rights Movement as a problem for one of their recent campaigns.

the Fiji Military Forces on how best to work with men on violence. Women's groups such as the Fiji Women's Rights Movements and the Soqosoqo Vakamarama were also consulted before programme implementation to ensure strategic gender needs were being addressed.

### ***Participants/Target Audience***

Men in positions of social influence and who work in concentrated cultures of machismo, such as the armed forces and police, have so far participated in FWCC's Male Advocacy Programme. This gender strategic work commenced when the Fiji Military Forces acquiesced to FWCC's persistent lobbying to conduct training amongst its staff. A partnership between the two organisations progressed once senior army personnel admitted that violence and negative attitudes towards women was a serious issue across their predominantly male employee base. In February 2002 the FWCC conducted its first two-week annual training on gender and violence with the FMF, which included the distribution of white ribbons<sup>80</sup> and coasters, especially developed for army personnel in peacekeeping posts.

### ***Staff and Training***

FWCC staff are local women. The Centre's coordinator has worked with the organisation since the late 1980s and in 2004 was appointed Human Rights Commissioner. Other paid staff and volunteers work across the Centre's five branches, which effectively operate as 'shelters' for women and children. On the main island of Viti Levu there is the original branch in Suva and three branches, in Lautoki, Ba and Nadi. On the smaller Vanua Levu there is a branch in Labasa. FWCC also runs mobile counselling clinics across both islands.

Counsellors have a broad knowledge of gender issues and speak in local languages (Fijian and Hindi) as well as English and are available twenty four hours a day, seven days a week to speak with victims or their families on phone or in person, in a non-judgemental manner. As noted in Chapter Six, the absence of impartial, non-judgemental counsel is a local problem in the Fijian social sector and this is one of the Centre's strengths to the extent that counsellors may visit women at off-site confidential locations if required. FWCC also offer legal guidance and representatives will accompany women to lawyers, police stations, the court and other destinations such as hospitals or other agencies.

Fijian and Indo-Fijian workshop facilitators are women who deliver challenging ideas about gender violence and women's rights to male participants. The FWCC believe that this does not

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<sup>80</sup> White ribbons are the international symbol of 'men against violence against women', a campaign initiated in Canada in 1991 and adopted by women's and human rights organisations worldwide. See [www.whiteribbon.ca/](http://www.whiteribbon.ca/)

pose a problem, contrary to the response from the MAP pilot coordinator who believes that "men want men to talk to".<sup>81</sup> According to the FWCC, what is paramount in their training sessions with men is that female facilitators have a sound knowledge of the issues, including being informed about "what's happening generally in Fiji" and being well prepared to answer questions and challenges which are an inevitable part of the workshops. It is also important for the facilitators and participants to avoid pitting themselves against each other by defending their gender (see also Keating 2004:57). My FWCC informant did say that a male presence would potentially broaden the scope and depth of their programmes, and building up a cadre of skilled men to co-facilitate future workshops with women is something that the FWCC are keen to develop.

### ***Programme Content***

Although the FWCC's Male Advocacy Programme works with the same group of men as Men as Partners, i.e. the Fiji Military Forces, its content and range of programme material varies considerably. Rather than emphasising men's role within the family in terms of being a husband and father, the FWCC take a human and women's rights approach to address the single-focus topic of gender violence. Table 8 below summarises the content of the workshops:

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<sup>81</sup> In a patriarchal culture where women are not afforded the same respect as men, it is suggested that there are limitations of women working with men in the gender field (for example Bhasin 1997). Likewise, discussing social relations with men as men "from the pulpit, especially for us men" carries more weight than when "our wives talk to us about failures, it becomes difficult to swallow" (Reverend Cama in an article by the FWCC in their Newsletter, volume 9, issues 3 & 4, November 2004, see [www.fijiwomen.com/newsletters/regional/archives/2004/nov/changing.html](http://www.fijiwomen.com/newsletters/regional/archives/2004/nov/changing.html)). Keating (2004:62) also suggests that the "bargains and relationships" between trainers and facilitators need to be clearly discussed or the workshop runs the risk of being "hijacked and of showmanship without commitment to gender equality".

- Gender awareness – social and biological construction of gender, ‘hegemonic masculinity’
- The status of women in Pacific societies in the home, community, church, and state levels
- Cultural, social, political, and economic factors related to gender violence
- Incidence, severity, and trends in gender violence in Pacific societies
- Violence Against Women (VAW) as a human rights and health and development issue
- Legal issues relating to violence against women
- CEDAW and the UN Declaration on VAW
- Dealing with violence (awareness, attitude and behavioural change)
- Personal commitment to gender equality and non-violence
- FWCC’s work: provision of crisis counselling and support services, public advocacy and campaigning

Table 8: Contents of the Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre’s Male Advocacy Programme

“FWCC teaches us to be better men, not weaker men”<sup>82</sup>

FWCC male workshop participants are necessarily required to challenge their ideas about their own identity. Confronting beliefs about what it is to be a man is one of the key components of FWCC’s gender training, and men who participate in these workshops learn about ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’ from a social constructionist perspective, “peeling away the different layers of socialisation which can often justify and excuse various forms of violence and mistreatment of women” (FWCC 2004a:4). Men are taught to recognise that masculinity and male behaviour are fluid and subject to change across ethnicity, class, religion, age, and sexual orientation.

Learning about ‘hegemonic’ masculinity, the dominant form of what is considered ‘male’ and ‘masculine’ in Fijian culture, or “the macho way of life” according to one FWCC participant, helps men understand that it is these ideas and scripts that contribute to gender based crime. Participants are taught to examine the various aspects of Fijian culture that shape dominant masculinity and encourage harmful attitudes towards women. They learn to critically analyse the gendered division of labour in Fiji, gain an understanding of how men as a group benefit from the violent and controlling behaviour of a few, and learn that violence against women is an institutional, cultural and structural phenomenon of society.

#### **Violence an abuse of Women’s and Human Rights**

Reviewing international legislation on the elimination of Violence against Women, FWCC’s participants learn about violence from a human rights perspective. They are taught that violence

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<sup>82</sup> A participant from the Fiji Military Forces quoted in the FWCC Newsletter on the two-week male advocacy training with FWCC (Volume 8, Issue 2, May/June 2004, page 3).

is a result of unequal power relations between men and women, and that it is a social mechanism that forces women into a subordinate position in relation to men.<sup>83</sup>

The impacts of violence are also analysed, such as the links between violence and health, particularly reproductive health, such as STIs and HIV/AIDS. Violence as it relates specifically to Fijian society, is generously covered in FWCC workshops, including the analysis of state violence. The impact of state violence on the community and family is discussed, as is the links between socio-economic status and acceptance and exercise of violence.<sup>84</sup>

#### **The Peninsula Declaration: A Personal Commitment to Gender Equality**

One of the key outcomes of the FWCC's workshops with men is a personal commitment to gender equality, including a commitment from workshop participants to disseminate concepts learnt on the course among their villages, neighbourhoods, workplaces, and church communities. Putting this into practice, participants at the 2002 male advocacy training workshop created an affirmative statement committing themselves to advocating for women's human rights at work, home, and in their communities. This was called 'The Peninsula Declaration' (see Table 9 below).

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<sup>83</sup> It is also a social mechanism that forces men into a subordinate position with men (ref), however this thesis is too limited to address this issue.

<sup>84</sup> The FWCC's 2001 research focused on the impact of the May 2001 coup on women and children, linking state violence with an increase in domestic violence.

### **THE PENINSULA DECLARATION**

- Shared decision making
- Value women's/wife's opinion and views
- Power sharing – sharing leadership roles
- Stop the violence at home
- Improve your current situation and strengths
- Realising your shortcomings and work towards improvement
- Adopt a non-threatening attitude/approach
- Supporting wife's (including children's) interests/goals
- Increase communication skills and be more loyal, supportive
- Care and understand spiritual and welfare needs
- Being more humane and gentle
- Being more gender conscious
- Spreading the 'gospel' to community (youth, religious, men's group) to condemn violence against women and to view it as a crime
- Push for awareness on violence against women at village, district and provincial forums
- Actively get involved and support all Government and NGO programmes that promote the elimination of violence against women
- Practice counselling skills at home, work, church
- Share/discuss reality/dangers of unprotected sex that lead to STIs and HIV/AIDS, including removing/eliminating myths about VAW and Human Rights
- Educate/uphold/practice understand basic Human Rights for women and children, and all human beings
- Our respective roles/responsibilities to the various rights as advocated by the various presenters

*"We, the signatories to the Peninsula Declaration, support the Naviti Commitment<sup>85</sup> and we are committed to actually practising our plan of action as agreed by the members of this group".*

**Table 9: The Peninsula Declaration**

At the end of the workshops, male participants are encouraged to write personal action plans so both the facilitator and participants can monitor their behaviour, feelings, and attitudes post-workshop.

### **Conclusion**

Contrary to the Men as Partners programme, the content of the FWCC's work with men in their Male Advocacy training is less ethnic and religiously flavoured and more focused on the human and women's rights dimension of gender issues, cutting across race and religion. It is arguably less tactful in its treatment of gender inequality and violence, focusing on a range of factors that underpin the prevailing attitudes towards women and gender violence in Fiji. That said, men's responses to the FWCC programme appear surprisingly positive given the amount of hostility that exists in Fiji towards the FWCC. These responses are discussed further in the next chapter, which puts both programmes to the test when considered against the 'working with men' criteria identified in Chapter Three.

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<sup>85</sup> "Naviti Commitment" was named after the venue for the first male advocacy training workshop.

## CHAPTER 8 The Analysis: Men as Partners and the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre - revisiting the theory and practice

### ***Introduction***

The distinct execution of Men as Partners and the Fiji's Women's Crisis Centre's work with men was discussed in Chapters Six and Seven respectively. The men they worked with were positive about their experiences with staff and the programmes. It was apparent that the design of Men as Partners was 'traditional' in content and structure, appealing to a wide audience. Although dealing with the taboo topic of sexual and reproductive health, it was positively received and readily accepted among those with whom it worked. Meanwhile, the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre took a more radical stance in the similarly sensitive area of gender violence. However its participants equally supported the FWCC's approach and the way in which they felt their lives and attitudes were transformed as a result of the programme.

This chapter now turns to a 'compare and contrast' exercise of both interventions. It begins by outlining the grounds for comparison, articulating the rationale behind my choice to use both interventions to support my thesis. After a refresher of the theory of gender and development (GAD), I apply the key elements of the 'toolkit' set out in Chapter Three to each programme, discussing their respective treatment of these issues.

### ***Grounds for Comparison***

My efforts to evaluate the efficacy of Men as Partners programme was helped by the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, whose work with men presented an excellent opportunity to critique Men as Partners. Their overall approach is feminist and pro-equality in philosophy and methodology, and in this sense they are not strictly comparable with Men as Partners. They are what Moser (1989) might consider 'gender strategic'. They may be considered as close as possible to a pure GAD programme, focussing on gender at every level in terms of family, household, politics and economics. The Crisis Centre is therefore a tool for helping discover to what extent, or if at all, Men as Partners was pro-equality and gender-sensitive – expectations that project documentation and donors led me to believe. In terms of Kaufman's (2003) guidelines however, they are also an interesting point of comparison with Men as Partners because although they may tick a pure 'GAD' box, there is arguably some room for improvement in their work with men.

Yet the two organisations had much in common. Both undertook workshops with similar groups of males. Both addressed two aspects of gender inequality – reproductive health and gender violence – which have clear linkages, and both programmes were funded by overseas donors and executed by local people.

It was of great significance that they both worked with comparable groups of men, in this case, the Police and the Fiji Military Force. This paved the way for a more meaningful analysis of their respective programme approaches given that both interventions engaged with an identical demographic. Had Men as Partners worked with rural miners and church pastors only, then the grounds for comparison between these men and urban-based military personnel would have been difficult to justify given the varying attitudes towards violence and sex and reproduction between urban and rural populations, and between religious leaders and the military. For example, the behaviour of men trained to engage in warfare, and the general milieu of the Armed Forces, is markedly distinct to that of rural men living a relatively parochial existence. Military servicemen work in an environment that at worst encourages violence and at best tends to breed an indifference towards sexual responsibility (Medrado 2003).<sup>86</sup>

Addressing two related topics also adds weight to a valid comparison, as there are strong links between gender inequality and violence and sexual health. Domestic violence impacts the sexual and reproductive health of women. Where violence occurs in a household setting, the incidence of maternal mortality and unintended pregnancies is higher, as is the incidence of sexually transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS. There is an inverse relationship between violence and sexual and reproductive health too. In Chapter Three it was observed that programmes that endeavour to give some reproductive and sexual control to women may in fact generate violence from men. Therefore the causal links between violence and sexuality and reproductive health are diverse and complex, and it is necessary that both be addressed in tandem rather than in isolation. The fact that there existed two related programmes working with similar target audiences on highly related topics provided a suitable situation and material for analysis.

The third point of comparison is funding and human resources. The execution of Men as Partners was part of the broader goals of its key donor, the UNFPA, in terms of improving the

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<sup>86</sup> Medrado's report noted that out of 170 new army recruits' responses to "Are there any times when a woman deserves a beating?" 25% replied 'Yes', 18% replied 'Maybe', and 18% admitted that they had physically abused a woman. This research was carried out in Rio de Janeiro.

reproductive health of the Fijian people as was the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre's Male Advocacy Programme, which was funded by the Australian aid agency, AUSAID as part of their on-going support for the FWCC's work for victims and perpetrators of violence. Employing the skills of local people with an understanding of the cultural context was another shared feature. But there were key differences here. Men as Partners was designed and run by a male with conservative religious beliefs and affiliations, while the Crisis Centre's programme was designed and run by a female, university educated and well versed in women and human rights thinking. This leads me to the critical point of difference between the two interventions. The background and ideology of these two people underpinned the distinctive *modus operandi* of each programme, and resulted in different responses from research participants.

The interconnected albeit strained relationship between the two programmes is another reason for comparison. From the inception of the Men as Partners pilot, the FWCC was to have a close association with MAP planners and key staff. The FWCC agreed to provide strategic advice based on their experience with victims and perpetrators of violence. They were also asked to consult with MAP staff on gender awareness and advocacy training, including counselling and crisis resolution, lend information and education resources and share their networks for referrals and outreach (Reproductive and Family Health Association of Fiji 2000). The relationship soured however as ideological gaps appeared between the two project leaders. This was most evident when the coordinators engaged in a live television debate at the cessation of the MAP pilot. Here their differences in terms of their approach in working with men to achieve gender equality were apparent.

### ***Frame of Reference***

In order to assess the impact of each programme in terms of their efforts in improving women's status and position within the family context, gender and development ('GAD') theory is being used as an umbrella with which to group and compare both programmes. The literature relating to this theory, including examples of the application of GAD in practice, was reviewed in Chapters Two and Three where it was argued that integrating men in gender projects is a means in which to improve the concrete conditions of women's lives and the structural inequalities that subjugate women.

To recap, GAD is central to the justification for, and promotion of, working with men, especially in sexual and reproductive health and violence, as it demands analysis of gender subordination inter- and intra-genders. Engagement with women and men at the family level is

also a critical component of GAD work, because the family is considered the “key institution through which gender identities and relations are first instilled and constantly perpetuated” (Kaufman 2003:6). Policy and programming must engage men and boys at this level for existing unequal dynamics to change.

The way in which men are included in gender and development work however is critical to the success of such programmes. In Chapters Two and Three, examples of GAD projects addressing men to improve sexual and reproductive health and eradicate violence were shown to be successful in bringing them on board to achieve equality. In Chapter Two, I outlined a number of concerns relating to working with men in what has historically been a woman’s domain. This concern is aptly summed up by Robert Connell (in Flood 2004:29) who warns “there is the danger that in speaking to men’s concerns, interests and problems, the impetus for justice for women will be weakened and slide into anti-feminist backlash”. Taking into the considerations the dangers of incorporating men into gender programming, it is suggested that the rationale for doing so be squarely positioned within a pro-equality agenda (Chant and Gutmann 2000), and a GAD philosophy provides that agenda.

For these reasons a GAD perspective is applied to both Men as Partners and the Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre’s work with men as a checklist to measure their success in working towards equality. The checklist, outlined in Chapter Three, includes five key points which I apply as a benchmark to analyse the primary case study, Men as Partners, and its contrast, the Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre. The remainder of this Chapter is a comparative analysis evaluating both programmes in terms of their ability to meet the five criteria:

1. Challenge Gender Norms
2. Create and Nurture Groups of Pro-Equality Men
3. Address Power Relations
4. Eradicate Violence
5. Realise Women’s Rights

### ***Discussion***

#### **Challenging Gender Norms**

In Chapter Three it was shown that the success of gender equality work with men is largely dependent on the ability of interventions to influence gender norms because gender norms determine attitudes and behaviours of individuals and communities (White, Greene & Murphy 2003). Altering or influencing these values serves to “modify or eliminate the behaviours that

arise from these social constructs" (White, Greene & Murphy 2003:1). Understandably this is not an easy task because it necessitates questioning long-held beliefs and people are highly sensitive to their cultural legacies, for better or for worse. Addressing men as supportive partners of women, including the respective social positions that constrain the roles of women and men, requires programmes to confront cultural norms that adversely affect the mental and physical well being of men and women. This includes strategically educating men about the ways in which they control family resources for example, and their roles as husband and father.

#### **The Fiji Women's Crisis Centre – Gender Differences are Socially Constructed**

The Fiji Women's Crisis Centre's Male Advocacy Programme encouraged men to reflect on their behaviour towards women in their families and as a society. Redefining gender norms was a key part in the FWCC's work with men by challenging the narrow stereotypes of 'masculinity' and 'femininity', some of which are predominant social norms generating disrespectful, violent and controlling behaviour. To begin, the FWCC's methodology was to take men through an analysis of the similarities, not differences, between women and men. For example, to show men that both genders possess the ability to reason, to plan, and to make decisions, focusing on shared traits, rather than differences, particularly the anatomical and emotional differences. The FWCC believe that such a focus on similarities is essential if gender role norms are to be redefined.

The FWCC believe that gender is not wholly biological and static. Rather gender violence and gender differences are socially constructed and men are informed that their behaviour and thought patterns are derived largely from social conditioning and can be changed. In employing this strategy, the FWCC's workshops aimed to disestablish the pre-conceived ideas of male participants about the way they 'ought' and are 'taught' to act towards their wives and partners. When verbal and physical transactions between men and women are no longer prescribed by existing norms, such as men adopting total authority and domination in terms of using culturally assigned power as a privilege over women, my respondent commented that men could then see alternatives to the way they currently act and communicate with their partners, and that this loss of power *per se* did not equate with a loss of manhood. Testament to the potential this strategy has in achieving the goal of equality is a comment by one of the FWCC's participants from the Fiji Military Forces:

The Fiji Women's Crisis Centre teaches us to be better men, not weaker men.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> A participant from the Fiji Military Forces quoted in the FWCC Newsletter on the two-week male advocacy training with FWCC (May/June 2004, Volume 8, Issue 2, page 3).

In their workshops with men, the FWCC discussed the behaviours that promote gender equity and mutual respect. These are ‘new’ behaviours for a majority of men because they demand an acceptance and commitment to thinking, feeling and acting differently. This is difficult given the amount of gender-biased messages about men and women in day-to-day life in Fiji. Communicating positive, alternative cultural models based on the idea that ‘gender’ is subject to change, assisted men to believe they were responsible for their actions and have the capacity to eschew violence.

### **Men as Partners – Better Fathers and Husbands**

By contrast, how well did Men as Partners fare in challenging gender norms? Implicit in its programmatic outputs was the need to alter men’s behaviour and challenge existing social constructs which required the content and facilitators to ‘rock the boat’ to some extent. For example, providing and seeking out information about sex and reproduction expected men, and the community at large, break traditional ideas about keeping sex topics ‘under the table’. Promoting communication among couples also required breaking away from stereotype behaviour, where equitable discussions, particularly about sex and reproduction, is taboo among couples and families, including between fathers and children. Likewise, introducing men to talk about, and be actively involved in, raising and nurturing their children, is encroaching on what is generally regarded a female domain. And last but not least, promoting non-violence expects many men to alter their belief it is their right to hit their wife and children.

To their credit, Men as Partners were reasonably strong on challenging some norms. I say ‘reasonably’ because the project was implemented in a conservative format, and any behavioural changes among project recipients may not necessarily be directly attributed to project execution *per se*. This is because interventions of this nature inevitably influence gender norms regardless of adopting a gender sensitive approach or not because gender “norms are inextricably linked to all facets of health behaviour” (White, Greene & Murphy 2003:1). However one of the problems the MAP pilot confronted in challenging these gender norms was an unswerving belief in the biological male and female differences that sustain unequal dichotomous relations between the sexes. For example, the project coordinator took pains to point out that “women can’t shift a crane”. Instead of focusing on the physical and static differences between men and women, the project could have endeavoured to make the “distinction between biological sex and socially-created gender” being the “basis for the proposition that a change in gender relations is possible” (Kaufman 2003:6). Herein lies one of the keys to working with men.

Yet despite the emphasis on the biological dualisms between men and women, there were some signs of success. MAP encouraged men in their traditional roles as decision-makers to help their wives in their respective traditional domestic role. They influenced men to be more involved in taking some responsibility for mundane household tasks that many men do not consider their duty. Male respondents claimed that since their involvement with MAP they realise how much women do and that supporting their partners in household tasks was critical to a happier family and more harmonious relationships. This was substantiated by the women who observed that having an extra pair of hands to help in the home, being treated with more respect, and valued for the work they do, gave them a stronger sense of self-esteem and contributed to an overall improvement in family dynamics and marital relations.

MAP's methodology played an important part in achieving this cultural and attitudinal shift in thinking and acting. Staff highlighted the extent of women's ongoing and often-tiresome productive work in the home by communicating in terms that appealed directly to their male audience, as one staff member explained:

I ask them [the men] to identify the [female's] role, from when they wake up in the morning to when they go to bed. And the male looks at this for the first time and goes, "ah, is it true?" And I say, "yet you come to us and say the female, your partners, don't want to have sex with you. Do you see why when you look at the jobs females have to do?" Then they start to see they take the woman for granted. They see that they come back from their jobs and demand the food to be on the table, and then sex. And many of them start to see that it is not fair.

The emphasis that MAP placed on men sharing the "domestic load", as the youth counsellor at Vatukoula remarked, was central to the programme's message:

MAP is about educating men to help in the family... if they follow it, they won't have problems in the family.

Notwithstanding the simplicity of this statement, feedback from female partners indicated that an increase in male contributions to the domestic workload had positive benefits for women and their families. This was a hands-on solution to meet the short and long-term needs of women by helping alleviate some of their workload and adjust the pre-existing beliefs of men that domesticity is the realm of women alone. In terms of Moser's framework, this aspect of MAP's programme addressed both a practical and strategic gender need. And in terms of Kaufman's criteria, is part of long-term gender transformation as young boys witness a shared role between parents, effectively challenging gender norms.

As well as encouraging male programme participants to share more equally in household tasks, Men as Partners also emphasised good fathering. It was clear through my discussions with men that many were enthusiastic about improving their parenting roles. Interviews were dominated by discussions on fatherhood, and men expressed desire to be more loving, communicating fathers. Good parenting, and particularly good fathering, was believed to be a panacea to solving many social problems, as one respondent commented:

If all the fathers can understand their role and plays that role properly within the home, then there's a new type of man who knows and understands and works together with that same understanding, then I believe there wouldn't be any jail, there wouldn't be, you know, all these social issues coming up. Man should be the one who should be seen to be everywhere in the home.

Parenting was a recurring theme in interviews with both men and their partners, which was expected given that in the baseline study for the programme Plange (2000) found that urban and rural Fijian men had a positive attitude towards family and fatherhood, and that extended and nuclear family is important to the individual's sense of identity. Ritchie (in Monsell-Davis 2000:213) observes that Pacific Islanders draw much of their identity through the extended family and community. But there are contradictions too. Custom and respect traditionally prohibits open discussion between children and their fathers. This was observed by Arno (in Aucoin 1990:37) who argued that inherent hierarchical kin relations between father and son create an on going site of conflict between the aging, authoritarian father and the "maturing, ambitious man". Here the son will defer to the father "regardless of the facts of the case" (Aucoin 1990:38). Conversely, females, specifically mothers, are regarded as more nurturing, open, trustworthy, and more approachable than fathers, a point which Miliakere Kaitani concluded in her (2000) study of urban Fijian men and one which a younger male respondent made:

Most of us, we trust our mums, more than our Dads, even though I trust my Dad. In Fiji, normally if we have problems, we don't normally go straight to our Dads, we go through our Mums, we don't talk directly to our Dads.

To MAP's credit, my research found that men considered spending more time with their children as key to a happier family and relationship with their spouses, and there were signs that participants were learning new ways of being a man, helping shape more equitable, positive gender relations. Staff commented that they could see that participants were starting to think that it was okay to be emotional and nurturing, particularly through their role as fathers.

Participants enthusiastically discussed the issue of parenting and five of my 13 male respondents drew a link between negligent fathering and 'parental absenteeism'. Ten respondents, six men and four women, said that they believed child neglect was the cause of many social issues. One senior male respondent from Vatukoula commented that mothers and fathers "don't seem to have time for their children" and a military respondent referred to the 'Fijian problem' of bad parenting, saying "there is a major problem with kids being left at home alone".

My respondents' concerns with bad parenting parallels those raised in some Fijian studies, which point to absenteeism as a leading cause of social problems. Michael Monsell-Davies (2000) examined the links between youth and violence in Fiji, and found that changes in family dynamics were one of the key reasons for wayward behaviour among young men. Mensah Adinkrah (1995) also argued that parents spend more time on religious commitments among other activities such as drinking *kava*, than with their children (in Monsell-Davis, 2000:211), and that this has an impact on crime and delinquency (see also Chandra 2000:67-68). The issue has also received some attention from Fiji's daily newspapers about the "unnecessary social responsibilities" parents take on resulting in "neglect of their children"<sup>88</sup>. A story told by one of my respondents from the Fiji Military Forces about the impact of his father's absence in his own childhood is illuminating:

I came from a broken family, my mother and father separated when I was 8. I lived with Dad for a while, then I lived with mother. With MAP I came to learn the role of the Dad to the children. That's what I missed. Before MAP, I knew that I missed something, it was deep inside me, but I didn't know it was that. So when it came to me, the MAP, I thought "oh, this feeling inside me is right". The feeling that I missed out. But before I didn't have the courage to live it, even to share [that feeling] with my wife.

If we think back to the toolkit outlined in Chapter Three, this was one of Kaufman's benchmarks of a good gender and development programme, that is, working with men and boys to develop their emotional life and a language of emotions (Kaufman 2003:23). MAP's emphasis on being a better father encouraged participants to form closer bonds with their children, be more present, and share more information with their sons and daughters. Even the women I spoke to identified with this, and female informants picked up on the point that encouraging dialogue between fathers and children, especially sons, is challenging traditional domestic hierarchy, particularly where the distance between father and son is indicative of the authority and position of the father.

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<sup>88</sup> See "Parents Neglect Children" in the *Fiji Sun*, Wednesday, 18 August 2004.

Assisting the transition between negligent and more active parenting is the relationship between parents themselves. Not only does the spousal relationship have a direct impact on children, but it is also found to have a powerful affect on reproductive health, because where verbal communication is low, sexual and reproductive health suffers (Blanc 2001). Blanc argues that underpinning this lack of communication are gender and power inequalities. For example, it is commonly believed to be 'unmanly' to engage in an equitable or open discussion with a partner, and even less so when conversation concerns personal and sexual issues. Hence the 'masculine' social norm of aloof, indirect communication invariably impacts the level and types of discussion that couples engage in. Plange's (2000) needs assessment of Men as Partners highlighted that a lack of communication between couples is an issue in Fiji, as well as a lack of dialogue and conversation about sex and reproduction between men. One of the objectives of the programme therefore was to improve couple communication.

MAP appeared to influence behaviour change in this area. The partners I interviewed felt their husbands listened to them considerably more than prior to their involvement with the programme. In doing so Men as Partners helped re-define what it means to be a man by improving the level and frequency of dialogue between couples including increased affection and physical contact. Even though this did not necessarily result in greater equality or more equitable decision making in relationships of men and their partners *per se*, it impacted positively on women's self esteem and resulted in a general improvement in marital relations. The opening up of communication was also seen to be beneficial for siblings, because, as one younger respondent put it:

We're not allowed to talk about sex because it's taboo. The brothers and sisters can't talk.

Having someone to talk to outside the immediate family was also another void MAP filled, and one that FWCC appeared to neglect. Networking and mentorship falls under Kaufman's recommendation to create and nurture groups of men, the second criteria in the toolkit.

#### **Creating and Nurturing Groups of Pro-Equality Men**

Changing behaviours, dynamics and norms among those men who are influenced from interventions like Men as Partners and the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre can feed into feelings of loss of power and identity. In response to this Kaufman (2003:19) stresses the importance of countering these feelings in terms of neutralizing men's fears and developing supportive

organisations, groups and informal ties of intimacy with other men. Creating and nurturing groups of men is therefore considered an essential part of offsetting the fears men have about a changing gender order and pro-equality groups of men can help support behaviour change. On this point, the FWCC did not seem to be enthusiastic about encouraging men's groups. And although MAP appeared to engender a strong network of men committed to the Men as Partners ideology, these groups were not exactly as 'feminist' as they should be (Kaufman 2003; White 2000; Connell 1995; Flood 2004).

#### **The Fiji Women's Crisis Centre – Throwing 'New Men' in to the Lion's Den**

One of the key outcomes of the FWCC's workshops with men is a personal commitment to gender equality. This entails participants sharing concepts learnt on the course with their villages, neighbourhoods, workplaces, and church communities. Putting this in to practice for the first time, participants at the 2002 male advocacy training workshop created an affirmative statement pledging themselves to advocate for gender equality at work, home, and in their communities. The collective creation of the Peninsula Declaration (see page 105) required men to move out of their comfort zones through reforming the way in which they have been socialised in to behaving and thinking. The FWCC respondent told me that part of the process is self-examination about their own attitudes towards violence and women and questioning their cultural beliefs, and that it is crucial for men address their own violence before they can be effective advocates, or provide counselling to other men.

However one of the problems I anticipated was a lack of emphasis on creating and nurturing *groups* of men. Kaufman (2003:19-20) warns that in order to support any individual behaviour change, a concerted effort to generate groups of like-minded men is imperative. This is because of the tension between a man's reality and the wider "gendered expectations" of the community that reinforces negative and destructive gender norms. From my interview with the FWCC and secondary sources, I felt that little effort was being put into providing and encouraging men's groups and was potentially a weakness of the Centre's programme. This is concerning given that building a network of gender equitable men is important in terms of the broader challenge in working with groups of men for gender equality.

That said, given the potential dangers of bringing men into gender equality work and the patriarchal environment in which the FWCC works, it is understandable that encouraging male camaraderie poses a risk for the organisation given their primary focus is crisis assistance for women as victims of violence. Since its inception the FWCC has faced consistent opposition, most visibly from political elite and religious leaders who have been critical of the Centre's

feminist perspectives on gender issues in the Pacific, and the organisation's vociferous "condemnation of gender-based crime" has been described as "provocative" (George 2004:17). As recent as 2002, the Prime Minister, Laisenia Qarese, publicly suggested that the FWCC temper their approach in campaigning against violence (George 2004:17-18), implying that the radical 'sledgehammer' effect of the FWCC's public advocacy work serves to distance the general population - women as well as men - rather than bringing them on side.

Responses from my MAP informants substantiated these concerns, and in the course of subsequent interviews and research, three issues emerged which raise a number of challenges for the FWCC, specifically their work with men. Firstly, the FWCC expound radical, 'un-Fijian' ideas in a 'foreign' way, creating animosity rather than support for their mandate. Secondly, there are concerns that the organisation emits an overly negative perception of men, without balancing the negative perceptions with positive attributes about the important, constructive role that many men play in society. Thirdly, the organisation, and more broadly other social change agents such as the media and government, does not provide alternative 'scripts' to being a male in Fiji. This acts as a disincentive to change and alter behaviour.

#### **Men as Partners – Anti-Equality Groups of Men**

To the contrary, Men as Partners displayed fervour about men organising. Yet this organising was not in line with suggested guidelines. Although the Men as Partners' male-targeted drop-in centre at the Emperor Gold Mine helped reduce the isolation among men providing a reliable and approachable forum for men and youth to air their problems, the strong networks of men that MAP helped build were not based on 'gender equitable' principles.

The absence of people with whom younger and older men felt they could share their personal issues meant that MAP filled a gap on this level. The Fijian 'culture of silence'<sup>89</sup> was referred to by nine of the 13 males affecting their ability to cope and manage and "talk about personal stuff". MAP enabled them to open up vital communication channels and staff were considered mentors with whom they could share a range of problems with. One of the participants in his early thirties said that the counsellor was the one person he could discuss the pain of a relationship break-up with. Another said that sharing with one of the MAP staff members was life changing for him. This individual had lost his father when he was six years old, and said

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<sup>89</sup> Compare this with comments by feminist activists, Imrana Jalal and Wadan Narsey (in Leckie, 2002:172) who describe the 'culture of silence' as a feminist concern as it applies to the condemnation of "any assertiveness by women as being disrespectful to those with traditional power".

that he did not fully realise the importance of having a father until he met the counsellor who became a father figure and whom he would visit regularly.

Provision of male practitioners for male clients also fulfilled a need expressed both by the MAP coordinator, project participants and others in the sector. The project coordinator insisted that “men want men to talk to” and that messages about sexuality and relationships had to “come from men” in order for men to “sit up and listen”. Vete (2003) observes that more male workers are needed in the sexual and reproductive health field, a point also made in an interview with the AIDS Taskforce Fiji<sup>90</sup>. Men interviewed in Suva and Vatukoula confirmed that male counsellors were necessary because they “help me find ways of communicating with others more directly because Fijian men don’t naturally talk, especially about sex”. A younger male remarked that talking with men from MAP is “a very good thing for the youth. If you want to spoke to someone, you can’t talk to someone straight, you can come here”.

The importance of men sharing with other men was also observed by a wife who said that one of the positive aspects of MAP was that it helped in “teaching [boys] about sharing stories with other boys”. The benefits of sharing was highlighted by another older male who deemed discussing more positive experiences just as important as airing concerns:

Men here tend to just walk alone, rather than as a team. So we can talk about it, and tell what’s happened, the things I’m enjoying in my family.

And for another younger male, Men as Partners “has taught me about man to man relationships”. One of the older men said he felt that for the first time it was okay to show his feelings:

Now you feel you can show your feelings and show your emotions.

While the provision of a mentor, counsellor, and father figure in some cases, filled an important gap for many the men I spoke with, these staff role models had a responsibility in terms of promoting attitudes and values in line with project goals. Because they held relatively senior positions of authority and power in the community, their advice and counsel was particularly influential. This appeared to be problematic in the case of the project staff’s views on women’s empowerment and domestic violence, a point discussed further below. One positive aspect

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<sup>90</sup> The AIDS Taskforce was the 2005 recipient of the Fifth Pacific Human Rights Awards for their work in providing anti-retroviral treatment to people living with HIV/AIDS in the face of widespread discrimination.

however was the emphasis placed on being more approachable, loving fathers. The counsellors were perceived as trustworthy and they acted as important male role models for the male participants, people who "know how to deal with the outside world", and a non-judgemental authority figure many of the men felt they "could talk to freely".

The project coordinator also had substantial social standing and respect. His high profile was partly due to several television and radio interviews that formed part of planned promotion to increase community-wide awareness of the programme, and it was clear that he had a great impact on those I interviewed. One respondent described him as being a "good teacher", and when asked about role models, another said, "I don't see any other as my role model. I mean [the project coordinator] is doing a great job. And I admire him for that ... he changed me". The project coordinator was held in such high regard by several of my respondents, that one of the military participants shared the following with emotion:

Every time [the project coordinator] rings me, I miss a beat. My heart misses a beat".

When quizzed on the reasons for this he responded:

Every time he teaches, the values and virtues of the subject. You know, he puts it to you so strongly, you know, you just cannot run away from him. He is a very good teacher.

The project coordinator also appeared to have significant powers of persuasion, as another of the Suva-based military respondents said:

If you want to stay in a good family, you have to listen to what [the project coordinator] says ... what he says has to follow. So if all fathers attend the workshop, there will be big change.

At this point my concerns about MAP not nurturing pro-equality groups of men, as Kaufman (2003:20) suggests, started to form. The coordinator made some broad claims about equality on television in August 2004 saying:

Basically there is no equality [in Fiji]. And there will always be a difference. No matter how much you say they are equal, there is a functional difference between men and women which precludes them from being equal.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Interview with Shamima Ali (Fiji Women's Crisis Centre) and Apete Rasovo (Men as Partners) with Netani Rika for "Close Up" televised by Fiji One TV, 15 August 2004.

So it appeared that MAP was shaped up to be an anti-feminist 'old boys' network, the very type of male agency Kaufman warns against (Kaufman 2003:20) because while the male drop-in centre in Vatukoula was a well-utilised space where men could discuss a range of personal matters with a skilled individual they respected and trusted, there was an inherent danger in this space as it was not underpinned by a pro-woman stance, and further interviews with non-programme staff hinted at the very real dangers of MAP choosing not to adopt a feminist stance.

Respondents from two different organisations expressed their fears of the potential for a programme like MAP to spawn an anti-feminist movement. One said that they felt MAP was less about human rights than about fighting for men's rights, given the increased consciousness among the general population of changing gender relations, as another respondent commented:

People are far more aware of women's rights – both women and men – than they used to be. This is because there are strong, quite high profile, women's groups in Fiji, such as the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, the Fiji Women's Rights Movement, Women's Action for Change and FemLink. They are not very popular, but people know about them.

These qualms highlight the pitfalls in the process of working towards gender equality, highlighted by Sarah White (2000) and Robert Connell (1995) in Chapter Three. The MAP pilot project indicated that there was potential for it to develop along similar lines, if it hadn't already, evident from its ideas about the 'rightful' place of women and men justified by carefully selected bible translations, the covert and overt sanctioning of male power and more disturbingly, male violence, and its 'club'-like approach in the justification for and setting up of a men's referral centre in Suva. Comments from MAP's project coordinator hinted at the potential of the centre to develop into an anti-feminist movement:

Men want a Referral Centre because they need some place to go, to have a good conversation, share health problems, and if they have other problems too, like divorce, communication, domestic violence, it's somewhere else to go. Men feel that divorce laws are against them. In Fiji, when people divorce, 99% of the time it's the women who will take the child and men have to pay maintenance. When women talk about equality, where's the equality in that? Men need to fight for equality.<sup>92</sup>

Fears of men fighting for equality are brewing in other Pacific Islands<sup>93</sup>. The Vanuatu Women's Centre, which holds men's workshops based on the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre model discussed

<sup>92</sup> Compare this comment with anti-progressive media reporting on the new Family Law Bill, such as 'Women make money from maintenance' and 'Complaints on Family Law Bill shock State' published in the Fiji Times, 24 October and 2 November 2002 respectively (cited in George 2004:14).

<sup>93</sup> These uncertainties exist elsewhere too. In the United States, there are concerns among women about complaints being made by men that the family court and legislation in general are operating "in favour of women" in terms of alimony, child maintenance and custody. Refer [www.snitch.com/000636.html](http://www.snitch.com/000636.html). Accessed May 2005.

in this thesis, expressed concerns at the establishment of a Violence Against Men Centre in Santo, Vanuatu. The coordinator of the Vanuatu Women's Centre asserts that the men's centre is "based on a lot of false ideas, misinformation and reactionary ideas about women", particularly the controversial notion that violence against men is a significant problem to warrant funding and organisation<sup>94</sup>.

Unlike some organised groups of men, such as those in the United States, Britain and Australia (see Connell 1995:235) who base their brotherhood on solidarity of feminist support, unless an intervention like MAP is underpinned by the recognition for gender equality, then the *status quo* of male-biased power will be difficult to break. Connell warns that there is a tendency for men's groups in being "positive about men [and] seeking the deep masculine" to "abandon issues of social justice" (Ruxton 2001:68) as does Kaufman (2003:20) who stresses that:

The promotion of men's groups within a GAD framework is to develop forms of organisation that explicitly and implicitly challenge the "old boys' networks" and the institutions of patriarchy.

So as well as neglecting to address and analyse power relations with men in their workshops, there was little evidence to suggest that Men as Partners participants were actioning equality and living equitably in their lives - counter to official programme aims to sensitise men to gender equality. Yet it is unclear to what exactly men were being sensitised to other than the sharing of domestic tasks.

Indeed, supporting females in anything other than their ubiquitous social norm of homemaker appeared to be controversial among both staff and beneficiaries. One sexual and reproductive health worker contextualised the difficulty NGOs in Fiji have in working on the equality message:

Some people are wanting us to be equal, like the Fiji Crisis Centre, the Fiji Women's Rights Movement and all that. But I would say that most people believe we cannot be equal. In the community, people are Christian and think that men are the head of the household. Women and men believe that. So when I go to the villages, the only thing that I'm driving at is I say to people, God created us to be equal. And when I am talking about gender, I ask people: which one of these roles can you assist in? But again, the bible still says that men are still the head of the household. And [the people] believe in that because it's in the bible, and they believe in the bible. Equality is a very difficult thing to help them understand.

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<sup>94</sup> Merilyn Tahi quoted in a press release published by the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, 1 July 2005, sourced from fijiwomen.com, 11 July 2005.

Given that equality is a difficult thing to help people understand, unless a programme analyses the “primacy of men’s power and privilege” (Kaufman 2003:16), the task of discussing equality will be near impossible.

### **Addressing Power Relations**

Explicitly addressing power relations is an integral part of working with men towards gender equality. This enables men to begin to comprehend the nature of patriarchy that bestows them with individual and institutionalised power. As a result men may realize how power and privilege translates to their everyday lives, from their personal relationships with women to the laws that perpetuate unequal gender norms and relations. As outlined in Chapter Three, it is suggested that it is only by challenging male power that men will be able to move forward in terms of living in a gender equitable way (Kaufman 2003). How well did our two programmes fare on this count?

#### **The Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre - “Addressing Systematic Inequalities is Critical”**

As with challenging gender norms, examining power relations was something that the FWCC did not shy away from. Women’s empowerment and the need for gender equality are constant themes in the FWCC’s work with men against violence. The specific incorporation of these principles are put in terms of sharing power in the family, including sharing decision making, and analysing and understanding the structural basis of gender discrimination. Indeed the FWCC was well known for its bold, systematic approach in working with men among a number of NGO workers I interviewed, as one respondent mentioned:

The way the Crisis Centre runs their programme ... is fairly good. That's because they come from a feminist perspective. For example, the difficult topic they're dealing with, male violence, [is] basically an issue of equality, or should I say inequality. The Crisis Centre discusses the three different principles of equality with men. They break it down and they explain why and try and show men what it is they are thinking and doing that sustains these inequalities. They get men to do this through different exercises. The Centre is definitely philosophical in their approach. They're analytical in their methods. I have no doubt this is very hard for men.

The analysis of power relations is also difficult for trainers as many men “get extremely upset when ... [they] have to look at power relationships within the family ... [and] are too afraid and resistant ... to consider patriarchy as a system (Bhasin in Keating 2004:51). The FWCC was not afraid to confront men with the difficult concept that male power is a structural, systemic social force. They approached this by talking programme participants through the relative status of women and men in Pacific cultures at all levels of society, and analysing the cultural, social,

political and economic factors underpinning gender-based violence. My FWCC respondent commented that the organisation believes that addressing the systematic inequalities is critical to achieving long-term, sustained results in terms of human and women's rights in the public and private spheres.

#### **Men as Partners – No Examination of Men's Power and Privilege**

By contrast, there appeared to be a lack of examination of men's power and privilege within the MAP programme. There was no analysis of gender norms in project content, and staff did not acknowledge the importance of addressing women's reproductive rights and choices. Furthermore MAP articulated confusing and counterproductive messages about the issue of gender-based power and its relevance to sexual and reproductive health.

On the one hand, participants were informed about the physical risks to women of male authority and female submissiveness. They were also advised that the belief that 'gender roles are natural' is a "myth" and a "gender stereotype", despite the demarcation of clear sexual identities of daughters and sons in the parenting section of the training manual. 'Clear sexual identities' referred to the 'righteous' roles of women and men which daughters and sons grow in to, that is, men as leaders, women as helpers, or as described by MAP: 'masculine sons, feminine daughters'.

Even though there was no formal analysis of power relations undertaken in the programme, men were clear about what constitutes power. They believed that much of men's power derives from being the key income earner, and that in the absence of this situation, as two men from Vatukoula remarked, "more women working makes men unhappy". Another remarked, "men are in power because men are the breadwinners".

#### **No Violence**

Gender-based violence perpetuates male power and control. It is often sustained by a culture of silence alongside the denial of the mental and physical consequences of violence (UNFPA 2004). Because violence is one of the pervasive forms of gender inequality, it is essential when working with men on gender issues that violence is addressed (Kaufman 2003). Again the two programmes differed markedly. In terms of their approach to dealing with the tricky subject of violence, the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre took a hard-line anti-violence stance. Yet in stark contrast, the Men as Partners group even appeared to condone violence.

### **The Fiji Women's Crisis Centre - Zero Tolerance for Violence**

It was apparent through my discussions with the FWCC and appraising the written material they provided that the organisation's ultimate goal in their work with men is to ensure that men begin to deeply care for and be concerned about reducing gender violence. Comments from participants confirmed the organisation's zero tolerance for violence stance, for example:

Men and women should work together side by side so our children, who are our future, would grow up in a secure environment, free from violence (participant from Male Advocacy Programme 2002).

In addition to discussing the various international legislation on the elimination of violence against women, FWCC inform workshop participants that violence is a result of unequal power relations between the sexes, a social mechanism that forces women into a subordinate position in relation to men.<sup>95</sup> The impacts of violence are also analysed, such as the links between violence and health, particularly reproductive health, such as sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS. Violence as it relates specifically to Fijian society is also covered in the organisation's workshops, including the analysis of state violence and its impact on the community and family. The links between socio-economic status and acceptance and exercise of violence are also discussed, underpinned by the FWCC's own research on this subject (Fiji Women's Crisis Centre 2001) which explores the impact of the May 2001 coup on women and children. This study drew strong connections between state violence and domestic violence.

Despite the difficulty in addressing such a sensitive and taboo topic, the FWCC's male advocacy programme encouraged men to confront long-held beliefs about violence often for the first time as they were exposed to the idea that all forms of violence against women are a violation of human rights. It was a different story with Men as Partners.

### **Men as Partners – “Domestic Violence is a Husband’s Right”**

By contrast, Men as Partners did not adopt a zero-tolerance for violence policy, contravening programme goals. Plange's (2000) baseline study for MAP identified that a majority of Fijian men believe that “punching one's wife if she gets him angry” is acceptable and that women often deserve physical reprimand when they are disobedient because women are “meant to obey men” (Plange 2000:9).

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<sup>95</sup> It may also be a social mechanism that forces men into a subordinate position with men.

Here my research confronted further contradictions, for while MAP claimed to deter men from committing acts of physical and verbal violence, violence and authority was not perceived or discussed as a breach of women's and human rights and there were signs that violent enforcement of male authority was sanctioned by staff. This was particularly evident in the responses of several men, most clearly articulated in the following comment by one of the military respondents:

[smacking your wife] is [the husband's] right. She's his wife. [The project coordinator] says you have to love your wife, even if you hit her. [The project coordinator] says if that's your wife, you can do what you want, but not serious injury. Even if you smack her, she won't run away.

As disturbing as this comment was, a number of men did appear to have reformed their behaviour and displayed visible signs of emotion when sharing their own experiences, as two of the military respondents described:

I used to hit [the children] with a ruler, or else I would hit them with a hand on the behind. But now I'll just call them and we'll sit down and I'll say sorry. And I'll say to them what they did. Which is changed from what I used to do before.

I realise the damage that I'm doing when I [beat the children]. And then every time I do it, I'm conscious that I'm doing that ... [but] I think I enjoy the relationship with my children now, much more than the screaming that I used to do before. I used to really lose my temper.

Whether or not their experiences with MAP directly influenced this behavioural change is unclear, especially because staff members legitimised the male authoritarian role. What was clear was that some men appeared to believe that aggressive behaviour "isn't very good for family life", but the habitual nature of raising a hand or using a stick to discipline partners and children was difficult to resist given that violence has been "passed on" from parent to child, as one of the miners observed:

It's been passed on, disciplining the child, so they know what's right and wrong. And that's where the beating is coming from. With me my Dad used to do that. Very severe. I've got a broken backbone. My Dad grabbed me, and pulled me outside. I lost consciousness for a day ... Those are some of the things, the teaching, the discipline, that is handed down.

Another complexity in addressing gender inequality, and violence more specifically, arose in the interviews. Men hinted at a peer pressure that exists among men to conform to norms of being

violent and controlling (cf. Keating 2004), as one respondent from the gold mine observed, “it’s just what we do, and our wives are meant to submit”<sup>96</sup>.

MAP failed to prepare its trainers or participants for the lived realities of many men because in addition to the more explicit reinforcement of inequality in the guise of gender-based violence, there appeared to be little understanding of, and action to address, other causes of violence such as poverty and unemployment. Recent sexual and reproductive health work with men, including Men as Partners programmes elsewhere (Mehta et al 2004), have highlighted the importance of examining and addressing the effects on the male psyche of these changes within the family (de Keijzer 2004; Mehta et al 2004). MAP’S unwavering subscription to the housewife/breadwinner model ran counter to the reality of the women and men I spoke with, as the females in all these households engaged in productive work over and above domestic chores, a typical scenario in Fiji. MAP therefore ignored the links between male unemployment and violence as nowhere did the programme acknowledge this issue, though several beneficiaries alluded to it, as did other non-MAP individuals. So although MAP Fiji had the potential to provide counselling and present positive alternative role models to men faced with unemployment, helping minimise the incidence of gender-based violence, MAP insisted on the imperative of the male breadwinner typology, ignoring the changed dynamics for many Fijian families.

Most concerning though was that MAP sanctioned the absolute authority of men and condoned violence and the implications are serious and far-reaching. If women are bound to a submissive template of what it means to be a woman, this has potential to impede their ability to make personal decisions and choices. In the context of sexual and reproductive rights, this is a key problematic. Where men are the decision-makers and are prone to exercising violence, this creates conditions where at best the women’s control of her body and sexuality is limited, and at worst, she is subject to emotional and physical abuse.

Therefore, at the end of the project’s pilot phase, the research found that MAP was reinforcing the male ‘habit’ to exercise violence, threatening to undermine some of the more positive effects of the programme. The key individual chosen to implement the Men as Partners pilot, a test case for Pacific region-wide implementation, appeared to be in breach of one of the project’s principal objectives. This does not bode well for future programmes and has serious

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<sup>96</sup> As in Maree Keating’s discussion on her experiences working with men in Cambodia, she argues that because of these deeply embedded norms and peer pressure among men, it is often “safer” and more helpful for women to raise the issues of domestic violence that men (2004:56).

ramifications for the partners and children of men who came into contact with MAP. In this sense, MAP was potentially failing participants and their families in neglecting to address one of the most pervasive forms of gender inequality.

In summary, without the commitment to non-violence from MAP staff, the more systemic difficulties in altering gender norms and social expectations were arguably insurmountable, and it came as no surprise that participants rejected the notion of women's rights, as discussed below.

### **Women's Rights Framework**

The absence of feminist, gender equitable goals in work with men may mean the difference between success and failure of male-focused interventions, as there are risks of 'reinscribing' patriarchy (White 2000). Picking up on the concerns of 'stealing the rights discourse' discussed in Chapter Two, the danger of incorporating men into gender programmes that do not subscribe to feminist-based goals can lead men to reassert their 'rights'. White (2000) and others (for example, Connell 1995; Flood 2004) warn of the dangers of mobilising men in the process of bringing them in to gender work and addressing male problems. One example is the American 'Promisekeepers' movement, which works within a framework of right-wing Christianity encouraging men to re-assert their power in the patriarchal corporate structure of family life, and reinstate themselves in their "proper place at the head of their families" (White 2000:35). Michael Flood also cautions that in working with men on fathering, 'father's' groups too can easily slide in to an "energetic defence of patriarchal masculinity and men's power, particularly in families" (2004:26). And Robert Connell reminds us that men's groups embarking out as 'pro-feminist' have the propensity to water down women's concerns over time and even develop into an anti-women faction (White 2000:34). Again, both Men as Partners and the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre operated radically different in terms of their framework.

### **The Fiji Women's Crisis Centre – Addressing Violence against Women within a Human Rights Framework**

The FWCC believe that a focus on human and women's rights is essential in terms of helping men to understand that eradicating violence is not only desirable for the benefit of both men and women, but that as human beings, women have the same rights as men. Chapter Seven (Table Five) shows the range of international legislation that the FWCC brought to men's attention.

These included the international bill of rights for women (CEDAW<sup>97</sup>) promoting gender equality, and the international declaration on violence against women (UNVAW<sup>98</sup>), an international consensus that states violence against women is a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women.

Exposure to this legislation is a challenge for both facilitators and participants. My FWCC representative observed that encouraging men to recognise that women's rights are human rights is at once the organisation's greatest challenge and the key to their success with men's groups. They believe this is one of the core differences between themselves and other organisations in Fiji, because "we look at the structures that aren't there, and bring them down to the community level" (Ali 2004). In other words, rather than encouraging men to accept the *status quo* regarding gender relations, the organisation helps men recognise that change is necessary, possible and desirable.

Those participating in FWCC's Male Advocacy Programme are taught that gender equality is a human right. This involves "challenging traditional and cultural beliefs and practices on violence against women and gender relations" (Fiji Women's Crisis Centre 2004a) and analysing sex-role stereotypes. The FWCC's male participants have articulated support for these egalitarian principles, as the following comments from military men illustrate<sup>99</sup>:

[Gender equality] leads to happy, loving and respectful families, which leads to a better society as gender equality allows for sharing of powers within a family.

Violence against women occurs because gender equality is hardly practiced which creates an unbalanced power structure.

[Gender equality] will help in the development of Fiji through education, economically, access to resources, decision making and so much more.

FWCC also encourage men to consider whether they are willing to be agents of change, in their work places, their homes and their immediate communities, resulting in the creation of the Peninsula Declaration, a personal commitment to gender equality (see Table 9, page 105).

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<sup>97</sup> Convention of the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

<sup>98</sup> United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women.

<sup>99</sup> Quotes are taken directly from FWCC's May 2004 newsletter, reflecting the views of participants from the 2002 male advocacy training.

### **Men as Partners – Aversion to Women’s Rights**

On the other hand, MAP project participants, including staff, were either uninformed or opposed to the concept of equality between men and women. Added to the pro-violence concerns outlined earlier, the adoption of a women’s rights stance, the cornerstone of gender equality work with men (Kaufman 2003), was deemed untraditional, anti-Fijian, anti-Christian and foreign, despite the programme’s mandate to sensitise men to the empowerment of women. Christian ideas about male superiority and a localised interpretation of women’s rights underscored the general aversion to rights among male *and* female respondents. Many commented that men are the leaders according to biblical teachings and that there is simply “not enough room for two leaders”, or heads of household.

Another concern was that women’s rights is about giving more power to men, rather than about sharing power and decision making. This view may be a result of cultural misunderstanding as Fijians interpret women’s rights as anathema to their own culture, particularly the idea that women’s rights entails more for women than men (Secretariat of the Pacific Community 2001).

Despite need to address human and women’s rights among MAP’s target group as identified by Plange (2000), I found an absence of discussion on women’s rights in the programme material, and a general ill feeling towards rights and power sharing was a common theme in my interviews with respondents. The following comments sum up this shared perspective:

Women’s Rights groups want to show that women have power. This isn’t good because the bible says that the leader of the family is God, and the leader of a woman is a man. It is becoming more and more that in some situations women have more power, especially with these women’s rights associations. Women will now go to police if they are beaten. They didn’t used to. (Male respondent from Emperor Gold Mine, aged 19)

I don’t like women’s rights. It is against the bible and our culture. Like a woman has the right to rule the country, to [have their grievances] heard, and most of the rights they have been talking about is in the family. They are talking about rights within family like if a husband smacks a wife, the women can take him to court. But it’s his right! (Male respondent from the Fiji Military Forces, aged 35)

Women’s rights is about women fighting for more and more power. This isn’t fair. (Male respondent from Fiji Military Forces, aged 40)

Three women I interviewed, at the project recipient level, possessed doubts about the applicability of women’s rights in a Fijian context, hinting at the potential for a backlash against women as they assert their rights, as one military employee’s wife commented:

This is what I think about women's rights. Women's rights means that women have equal rights as men. But this is not good, it's not good here in Fiji, because for lots of relationships when equal rights is brought back to the home it just doesn't work. It's the man who has to lead, not the woman. In Fiji, it won't work when the woman walks all over the man.

Education about rights then would seem a fairly obvious priority given that there exists widespread misunderstanding on exactly what rights means for women and men. However the way in which rights is framed and discussed is just as imperative. A number of NGO respondents hinted at the importance of promoting rights in the appropriate way among Fijians. The project coordinator himself believed that addressing rights in a fashion that would be understood and accepted by the average Fijian was paramount:

Women's right's are great. Women's rights are human rights. But it's the way [women] are fighting for rights which is putting them in a precarious situation. Men here think women want to be equal and overtake them. That's the perception that men have of women libbers. But it's about the right to be treated as a human being. Women's rights are definitely an issue. But it's the way that [some] women put it, which gives people/men a negative perception. (MAP Project Coordinator)

This salient point is made by Sandy Ruxton (2004) who cites an argument made by a male human rights activist that the approach to gender and rights is just as important as the need to work on the issue:

I don't use the term 'gender', which is not accepted in Yemen. It is about absolute equality between women and men, which is not possible in Yemen. We may need to "Yemenise" the gender concept" (Alademeei in Elsanousi 2004:171).

However considering the resistance towards, and difficulties in addressing, women's rights, Men as Partners did little to debunk the negative perception of these groups, an issue that Plange (2000) suggested the programme address. Consistent with Plange's (2000) baseline study commissioned for MAP, the FWCC was negatively perceived by a majority of men I interviewed, like this one who shared:

There are too many [given] rights to the women. The Fiji Women's Rights Movement and even the Women's [Crisis] Centre are just too much, because there are now so many rights given to women. They are giving more rights to the women than the men. (Male respondent, Fiji Military Force, aged 25).

Instead of addressing the hostility towards women's organisations such as the Fiji Women's Rights Centre and the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, as outlined by Plange (2000), MAP appeared to at least ignore this opposition, at most, exacerbate it.

### ***Conclusion***

Like many traditional WID programmes, MAP fell into the trap of purporting and meaning to bring about good change for women and men, but in reality failed to address entrenched stereotypes and male-oriented cultural patterns. The framework of the programme had important bearing on this outcome. The dissemination of MAP's messages sat squarely within a Christian ideology and a majority of project participants and their wives repeated similar lines that men are above women because "God created man first" and "it says that man is the leader in the Bible". In the wider social context, this can be linked to increasing concern of a growing wave of religious and patriarchal fundamentalism in Fiji, largely generated by the influential Methodist sector, and many women's organisations feel there are threats to overthrow a lot of the work accomplished by rights organisations.<sup>100</sup> On this note, there were signs that Men as Partners was a forum for promoting male authority in light of the work carried out by these organisations that are perceived as threatening traditional gender roles within a 'traditional' Christian society. This was apparent in the comments made about women's rights groups both by the respondents in Plange's (2000) pre-programme study for MAP and this post-pilot programme research, which indicates the programme did little to change men's perception of women status and their rights. As discussed in Chapter Four, rapid social change in Fiji has disrupted the established gender order, and many men are living under the 'threat' of gender equality. Given the resistance to the approach of women's rights organisations to social reform, MAP fits in with Connell's description of Western "masculinity therapy" during the 1980s as men were 'workshopped' through feminism and could equally be seen as subtle strategies (Scheyvens 1998). However despite any therapeutic value of the MAP workshops, there exists the threat of replacing the reform of gender order rather than supporting it as Connell warns (1995:206-211). My interviews indicated that while many men were open to making personal adjustments, they lacked any real commitment to the principles of feminism and in fact exhibited a strong anti-feminist spirit.

MAP coordinators believed that the delivery of gender education would be better received through a male medium than a female one. This point has been made by others, and some feminists are alarmed by the danger that gender equality may often bear more weight when delivered by men (Pease 2000).

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<sup>100</sup> The Methodist community was reported as being a difficult, long-term obstacle to the passing of the Family Law Bill. One women's activist interviewed for this thesis commented that the powerful Methodist church was "very hard to deal with" on the Bill and at one point there were concerns that the Bill would not be passed as Methodist leaders "did not like certain sections of the proposed legislation because it was deemed inappropriate for Fijian family life".

Working with a Christian structure, MAP persuaded men to be kind and more generous with the *de facto* power they possessed. However counter to suggestions that all forms of power must be questioned in programmes with men, from the personal and professional to the “gendered logic” of politics and institutions in the global system (White in Cleaver 2003:xiii; Kaufman 2003), the MAP programme did not encourage men to analyse, share or give any of this power away in the manner of being women’s allies for equality. Instead it required men to be more loving and supportive husbands and fathers. On this point, the programme partially addressed the multifarious nature of women’s lives in terms of their reproductive and community management roles in that men were encouraged to fully participate in family life. Women felt they gained rather than lost on this count. However the *reason* underpinning the inclusion of men in family life was arguably flawed. Men were led to understand that if they contributed to domestic work and behaved more affectionately towards their wives then they may encounter less resistance in attaining spousal submission and obedience from their children.

The logic of the authoritative-submissive marital dynamic was articulated most clearly by the project coordinator:

When you love your wife, the wife will have to submit to the husband. Those are equalities that have to be held out first. If you demand of the man you won’t get it, if you demand from the woman you won’t get it. There is some equation that you have to fulfil first. The man has to love the woman, and the woman has to submit to the man. And with submission, well right now, women cannot submit, they do not want to submit to the man. How can the woman submit to the man, if the man does not love the woman?<sup>101</sup>

So it could be interpreted that the execution of this Men as Partners project was about enticing men to show more love to their wives in order to re-establish a traditional authoritative-submissive marital dynamic. Interviews with beneficiaries and their wives substantiated this gender model as an underlying theme of the programme’s workshops and counselling sessions, which ignored the nature and source of gender oppression, safely skirting around any focus on men and their part in women’s subordination – one of the more negative features of WID projects as discussed in Chapter Two.<sup>102</sup> So while MAP acknowledged that women require the support of men to protect their sexual health, for example, it sanctioned the final authority of

<sup>101</sup> Interview with Shamima Ali (Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre) and Apete Rasovo (Men as Partners) with Netani Rika for “Close Up” televised by Fiji One TV, 15 August 2004.

<sup>102</sup> Feedback from my female participants can be compared to the responses from women who participated in the Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre research. These women indicated dissatisfaction when seeking help from their religious organisation for domestic abuse. The research reported that a common response to women from their religious counsellor was simply to “be a more loving, better wife” (FWCC, 2001:51).

men, in reality leaving women little autonomy in the sexual and reproductive arena, as well as the domestic realm in general.

Yet the programme did draw on positive aspects of masculinity, encouraging the emotional and nurturing side of men in their role as husband and father - an important attribute of gender programming with men (Kaufman 2003). As a stand-alone feature however, promoting men's emotional and nurturing characteristics is not sufficient to bring about gender equitable outcomes. However does the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre's 'GAD'-styled intervention with men hold more potential to generate gender equitable outcomes amidst the perceived incompatibility of women's rights with Christianity?

To quickly recap, a GAD programme attempts to analyse women's oppression in terms of the relationship between women and men, and requires a breakdown of traditional gender relations and a reconstruction of new designed and defined gender roles in order to achieve equality. The Fiji Women's Crisis Centre achieves this, to the point that they admit that their work with men involves foreign concepts which are especially challenging for males over thirty who live and work in a culture of machismo. This admission was substantiated by one of their participants from the Fiji Military Forces who commented that the ideas of men are "tough to crack" as "we are products of a patriarchal institution."<sup>103</sup>

Indeed the Centre's feminist ideology and commitment to women's and human rights is anathema for many Fijian men and women. One key respondent who participated in both the FWCC and MAP programmes commented that a principal reason as to why the FWCC approach did not appeal to the broad public was its negative messages about men. This military employee commented that he felt that he, and his friends and colleagues, were already over exposed to negative reporting about men in the media, alongside the "work that the centre is doing about rights and violence". In his perspective the FWCC workshops failed to be positive about men and that:

It's the daily problems that we keep hearing about ... when you go through [the FWCC] workshop, you hear the same things you hear on the news. I think they're doing a great job, trying to analyse the problems that some women are facing, but with me ... [MAP] talks about the issues of us men, and me myself, being a man. I understand that I can play a better role at being a man, so that the community at large will be [better].

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<sup>103</sup> From FWCC's May 2004 newsletter (volume 8, issue 2).

Kaufman (2004:25) comments that using the language of blame serves to alienate men and boys, defeating the purpose of addressing males. Instead of convincing them of the benefits of changing their behaviour, "language that leaves males feeling responsible for things they haven't done or for things they were taught to do, or feeling guilty for the sins of other men, will alienate [them] and promote backlash". Other programmes working with men to help them control and understand their own violence admit that only a small number of men who participate in these programmes actually go through the process and come out the other end with a more equitable attitude and practice towards women (de Keijzer 2004:37).

There are also concerns that there is unbalanced emphasis placed on women's issues, such as violence and rape, ignoring the problems and grievances of men and "the potential for backlash in advocacy efforts against gender-based violence" (UNFPA 2000:31). This perspective was corroborated by my discussion with a sexual health practitioner in Fiji who asserted that negative images of men can be counterproductive. But she also observed that there is simple logic at play here - if there's no violence, there's no negative reporting:

See the men don't understand. The thing is, when the issues appear in the paper, it's always running the men down, you know, because of the beating ... [But] it's hard on the men. But if [the men] look at the issue, they might understand that if you men don't do that, there'll be nothing coming out of the paper.

This informant also felt that the Crisis Centre is walking a tightrope and needs to be acutely strategic and sensitive in their work as "it is hard for men to accept change and unemployment while their wives are working. Men need alternatives". In review of Oxfam GB's work in Bangladesh and India, Sharon Rogers (2004) also suggested that newspaper articles about rights and violence have a limited effect if they are not supported by positive, alternative scripts. One of the male staff members from Bangladesh is quoted by Rogers as saying:

Newspaper articles about women's rights and violence against women have little effect. People turn off... this kind of news, because it's generally negative, and there is so much bad stuff happening in Bangladesh. We need positive examples" (Rogers 2004:185-186).

It's not only a lack of 'scripts' that is problematic in many programmes involving men. Some male development practitioners working within Oxfam have voiced concerns about the difficulty facing men in patriarchal societies. For those men who believe in equality, they feel undue burden is placed on them to answer for women's subordination, and that there is too much uncertainty as to how individuals can contribute to gender equality (Rogers 2004:179-180). Even men in Fiji insist 'equality' has to be done the 'right way' ('vakavanua' or 'custom')

so as not to alienate men (see also Brown 2004). The MAP coordinator himself spoke to the difficulties men have in understanding 'rights', not because rights were 'wrong' per se, but in the inaccessible delivery of the concept. This highlights the tension between the personal and structural basis of patriarchy, and the need for a multi-dimensional approach in challenging female subordination – one that blends user-friendly, culturally sensitive ideas, but one that challenges inequality at the same time. But perhaps the reservations people have about the Crisis Centre's style of delivery are more representative of generic difficulty men at the grassroots face in conceptualising the systemic nature of patriarchy (Bhasin 1997). It is also conceivable that Crisis Centre's workshops fail to offer those men who are courageous enough to confront themselves, a feasible, alternative script to the current conventional one.

Yet the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre was considered by the majority of my Suva-based interviewees as a role model for the Pacific in terms of gender and development programming involving men and that the execution of MAP execution was flawed because:

... it is dealing with [gender] issues on a very superficial level. The way I see it, the Crisis Centre is far more effective. If I was managing Men as Partners I would only hire someone who has undergone the Crisis Centre programme so that person has a full understanding of why there is violence against women and the effects of this, and other gender inequalities that are so pervasive here.

The Crisis Centre was also seen to be more appropriate and effective *because* of their ability to encourage men to confront difficult issues regardless of concerns that it doesn't offer alternative scripts:

The concept [to work with men in bringing about gender equality] is a good one [and] the way the Crisis Centre runs their programme, well, their programme is good. They come from a feminist perspective with men ... where it's an issue of equality. They discuss the three different principles of equality. They break it down and they explain why [there is violence]. It's more philosophical [than other programmes in Fiji], it's analytical.

But while I encountered many criticisms of MAP's approach, there also seemed to be a consensus that the programme's delivery was relevant for Fijian culture, readily integrated into the community because it spoke in terms both Fijian men and women could understand. Where to from here then?

## CHAPTER 9 The Conclusion

This thesis has illustrated the strengths and weaknesses of the Men as Partners programme and the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre's work with men in the context of contemporary gender and development theory and Fijian society. What can be deduced about the efficacy of the mass appeal of MAP's 'conservative' approach versus the less popular 'radical' strategy taken by FWCC in addressing gender inequality? This final chapter draws some final conclusions about the way in which bringing men in to gender work is vital to the goal of achieving equality.

The approach taken by Men as Partners was culturally sensitive. The programme built on positive aspects of Fijian culture, such as family life and fathering, that provided entry points for its work in encouraging men to participate more actively as 'partners' and a number of project strengths emerged. However, I have argued that cultural appropriateness was taken to such a point that the 'gender sensitization' component did not rock the boat at all, and it was relatively easy for men to expound the virtues of a programme that supported the *status quo*, in that there was no real expectation for them to acquiesce their power in any sense. On the other hand, the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre's work with men was bold in its approach, daring to challenge men about their power, personal and cultural beliefs and behaviour in face of widespread hostility and resistance. Yet the Crisis Centre's intervention was so confrontational it risked alienating men, and women.

Prior to undertaking fieldwork, I envisaged my final conclusion would support the Men as Partners programme. I anticipated that Men as Partners would have contributed to a slow but steady transformational gender change, even though it was not overtly couched in feminist ideology. I imagined that it would be considered feminist because it would attempt to address men for the benefit of women's sexual and reproductive health and transform men and women's lives albeit in the mundane domestic sphere - a 'subtle strategy' in the manner which Scheyvens (1998) describes in her research on women's empowerment in the Solomon Islands. Instead I am more comfortable stating that although the Men as Partners pilot programme encouraged a more caring, expressive model of masculinity, it directly and indirectly, reinforced the structural conditions that underpin gender, class and racial privilege among ethnic-Fijian men and could not be seen to be part of a longer-term process of social transformation, particularly as it appeared to sustain the notion that men ultimately have a 'right' to commit gender violence.

Putting aside the wider social context of Fiji, a significant hurdle for the Men as Partners programme was its human resources and resulting project materials written and implemented by

chosen staff. The key individual sub-contracted to execute the project lacked ideological commitment to the ultimate goal of women's empowerment. This was most apparent as the Men as Partners programme and the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre began their relationship as potential partners yet ended up as adversaries. Kaufman warns that there inevitably will be many challenges and conflicts between men's and women's organisations, but that they can be "part of the healthy lived reality of changing gender relations" (Kaufman 2003:20). However had the MAP coordinator been educated about and committed to women's empowerment, some of the problems encountered may have been addressed and strategies to work with these problems may have been attempted. This points to the importance of identifying strategically placed men, as well as women, to work in this area of development as gender equality allies (Levy, Taher & Vouhé 2000).

The more progressive GAD work of the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre challenges men's views of themselves and stimulates discussion with participants about their individual and collective role in women's subordination. Yet in doing so the Centre meets with strong resistance and it is not only accused of cultural interference but also alienating the very group in most need of reform. Therefore in the case of the Crisis Centre's efforts with men, it can be seen that while GAD is strong ideologically it is difficult to truly implement, resulting in less than effective attempts at the programme level where men are left feeling hostile, blamed and inadequate. Here GAD work needs to be carefully and sensitively structured and implemented to attain buy-in from its key stakeholders and recipients. As Connell (2003) suggests, "it must build on men's growing concern with gender change, and find ways of including issues about men and boys in gender and development policies without weakening the effectiveness of those policies for the advancement of women and girls".

In Fiji, as well as elsewhere, this is the ultimate challenge in improving the lives of women and girls. Many men and women simply believe that Fiji is not ready for women's rights or the rights approach, and that it is too soon for 'feminism'. However as put to me by one of my respondents, "when will we ever be ready?" Consequently there is still some way to go for men to be seen as part of the solution. Despite the GAD theory and suitcase of tools discussed in this thesis earlier on, it would be fair to say that gender equality work with men is by no means clear cut. While acknowledging that "if things are to change, men will have to change" (Pickup 2001:42), women also perpetuate their own subordination by buying-in to machismo despite the political efforts "to overcome the material and political factors assumed to underpin chauvinism" (Forrest 2003:94), and female alliances with men are a very real threat to gender equality work (Kandiyoti 1997; Connell 1995). The space of gender and development is truly

complex when we consider these other obstacles such as women's role in their own disempowerment, and this demands further thought in terms the practical application of including men in gender equality work. It does not mean that conservative approaches such as using Christianity as a gateway is not relevant or effective. A participant from one of the EngenderHealth MAP programmes acknowledges that the bible and custom can be interpreted and appropriated for patriarchal or feminist interests, saying:

I used to use the Bible to defend patriarchy. I now use it to challenge gender stereotypes  
(Mehta, Peacock and Bernal 2004:100)

While taking local interests and beliefs seriously, new 'men in development' strategies must be unapologetically feminist in their focus. Even so, alliances can be built among people of various religions, races, classes and gender but they must have a shared interest in gender equality and altering the gender *status quo*.

## APPENDICES

### ***Appendix 1: Interview Guideline***

These questions focused the interviews. However discussion was wide-ranging and a number of issues not apparent in these questions were also covered.

#### Schedule for Male Participants of MAP (Group 1)

##### PART 1

1. What is your name?
2. What is your wife/partner's name?
3. Where were you born?
4. What is your age?
5. What is your religion?
6. Do you go to church? Yes / No
7. Current status - Married / Living with Partner / Engaged / Widowed
8. Have you ever been divorced or separated?
9. How many times have you been married?
10. How many children do you have?
11. Are all your children from the same marriage?
12. Who is living with you in your house?
13. Are you employed? If Yes, what is your main job?
14. Do you have another job or source of income?
15. How many days or hours do you work in paid employment per week?
16. Does your income cover your basic needs?
17. Are you educated? if Yes, what level of education have you attained?

##### PART 2

18. How did you first learn or hear about Men as Partners
19. What have you learnt most from your contact with Men as Partners advocates or brochures?
20. What do you think it means to be a "partner" as a man in a relationship?
21. Has your sexual practice or relationship with your wife changed in any way since your contact with Men as Partners? If yes, please explain what has changed;
22. Has your relationship changed with other members of your family since you came in to contact with Men as Partners? if Yes, please explain who and how?
23. Have you discussed anything about what you have heard about the Men as Partners message with your wife?
24. What does your wife think about the ideas promoted by the Men as Partners counsellors?
25. Have your ideas about the roles of men and women changed since involvement in the project?
26. Have you talked with your male friends or family members about the Men as Partners message? please explain

##### PART 3

27. Who do you see as your role models or heroes? (in your family/community; Fiji; or other parts of the world)
28. Can you tell me what you like about this person / these people?
29. What do you think the role of the husband in the family is?
30. What do you think the role of the wife in the family is?
31. Who makes the decisions in the household? (probe)

32. When you are having problems, do you talk about your problems to someone? If no, why, If Yes, who do you normally share your problems with, and what sort of things do you share?
33. Would you be happy if your wife was the main breadwinner? If No, can you explain why you wouldn't be happy?
34. What would people think if your wife was the main breadwinner?
35. Have you heard about "equality" between men and women? Please explain what you think it means
36. Have you heard of women's empowerment or women's lib? If Yes, please explain what you think it means
37. In Fiji, do you think there are situations where men have more power than women? Please explain those situations
38. In Fiji, do you think there are situations where women have more power than men? Please explain those situations
39. Would there be any benefits to society if women had equal power with men? Please explain those benefits, If No, please explain why not

#### Schedule for Wives/Family Members of Male Participants (Group 2)

##### PART 1

1. What is your name?
2. What is your husband/partner's name?
3. What is your gender/sex:
4. Where were you born?
5. What is your age?
6. What is your religion?
7. Do you go to church?
8. Current Marital status - Married / Living with Partner / Engaged / Widowed
9. Have you ever been divorced or separated?
10. How many times have you been married?
11. How many children do you have?
12. Are all your children from the same marriage?
13. Who is living with you in your house?
14. Are you employed? If Yes, what is your main job?
15. Do you have another job or source of income? If so, please state (e.g business from home)
16. How many days or hours do you work in paid employment per week?
17. Does your income cover your basic needs?
18. Are you educated? If Yes, what level of education have you attained?

##### PART 2

19. Have you heard about the Men as Partners programme?
20. When did you first learn about it?
21. What do you know about this programme / workshop? (prompt/probe)
22. Has your husband discussed anything about the Men as Partners message with you? Please explain
23. Has your sexual practice or relationship with your husband changed in any way since your contact with Men as Partners? Please explain what has changed: (prompt/probe)
24. Is your husband behaving any differently since partaking in the workshop? For example, is there anything he is doing now that he didn't used to do? Or is there anything he has stopped doing which he used to do? (prompt/probe)
25. What do you think it means for a man to be a "partner" in a relationship?
26. Have your ideas about the roles of men and women changed since your husband's involvement in the project? Do you expect different things from your husband now?

**PART 3**

27. Who do you see as your role model or hero? (in your family/community; Fiji; or other parts of the world)
28. Can you tell me what you like about this person / these people?
29. What do you think the role of the husband in the family is?
30. What do you think the role of the wife in the family is?
31. Who makes the decisions in the household? (prompt/probe)
32. Are there some things you wouldn't want your husband to do in the household? Why?
33. When you are having problems, do you talk about your problems to someone? Whom do you normally share your problems with?
34. How would you feel if you worked full time and your husband looked after the children and the home?
35. What do you think people would think if you worked full time and your husband looked after the children at home?
36. Do you think your husband would be happy if you were the main breadwinner? Please explain further.
37. Does your husband hit you?
38. Do you tell anyone about this? What do you do when this happens?
39. Have you heard about "equality" between men and women? Please explain what you think it means
40. Have you heard of women's empowerment or women's lib? Please explain what you think it means
41. In Fiji, do you think there are situations where men have more power than women? Please explain those situations
42. In Fiji, do you think there are situations where women have more power than men? Please explain
43. Would there be any benefits to society if women had equal power with men? Please explain those benefits.

**Schedule for MAP Staff (Group 3)****PART 1**

1. Date
2. Name
3. Position
4. Sex M / F
5. Brief work history

**PART 2**

6. Who are the project's target population?
7. What was the rationale in identifying this group?
8. What do you believe are the key benefits of the project?
9. How do these measure against project objectives?
10. What do you feel is necessary to sustain these benefits?
11. Are there any negative impacts and/or risks relating to the implementation of the project? How could these risks be mitigated?
12. What would you like to see done differently in the future?
13. Have women been involved in MAP? If so, how?
14. How effective do you think a male-only approach is?
15. Have any other stakeholders been engaged in the project? If so, whom and why?
16. What sort of training have project staff, including advocates and peer educators, had in the promotion of "non-restrictive gender roles"? And what does this mean in a Fijian context? (an activity against key project outputs in the FIJ/01/P04 document (July 2000)

17. In your opinion, what does “gender equality” mean?
17. What have you enjoyed most?

### PART 3

18. Who do you consider are role models for Fijian men?
19. Who do you consider are role models for Fijian women?
20. What sorts of pressures do men face today? How has this changed over time?
21. Do you think the project has altered participant’s ideas about what it means to be a man? How?
22. To what extent do you think wives/families of participants support the MAP message?
23. In what ways do you think a programme like MAP can help women realise their rights?

## Appendix 2: Men as Partners brochure

### **How will the Project be Run?**

The project is funded by NZODA through JNFFA. New Zealand Family Planning Association is the Executing Agency and is responsible for overall management of the project.

The Reproductive and Family Health Association of Fiji (RFHA) is the Implementing Agency.

The RFHA is an indigenous organisation that was established in 1996 and is an Associate Member of the International Planned Parenthood Federation. It works in the area of community education on reproductive health, family planning and sexual health.



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**MAP PROJECT  
R.F.H.A. F.I.J./J.N.F.F.A.**  
Funded by NZODA - UNFPA



### **What does "Men as Partners" mean?**

An umbrella term that has two very important facets:

#### i) **responsibility**

this stresses the need for men to take up responsibility for the consequences of their sexual and reproductive behaviour.

#### ii) **participation** –

refers to men's supportive role in their families, communities and work place.

### **What would the "Men as Partners" Project do?**

The project involves an information, education and communication programme that will sensitize men to their share responsibilities in:

- Reproductive health, family planning and sexual health.
- Family life.

### **AND**

- The encouragement of men to engage in relationships and life styles that will promote their health and well

being as well as that of their wives and families.

### **It Involves:**

- i) The production and dissemination of information and education materials.
- ii) The conduct of outreach Workshops and seminars.
- iii) The provision of counselling services.
- iv) The provision of clinical services to address sexual and reproductive health concerns of men.

### **What is the project purpose?**

- i) Create awareness amongst men of reproductive health, family planning and sexual health.
- ii) Sensitize men to gender issues such as gender equity, the empowerment of women and gender based violence.
- iii) Promote and enhance communication and relationship skills among couples.

- iv) Establish and strengthen reproductive and sexual health services for men.

### **What is the Project goal?**

- i) Improved reproductive health status of Fiji's population.

### **What is the Target Population?**

Men as Partners Project is a pilot project and during the 2 year pilot phase will target men who work in vatuksoula, Military Personnel and Rugby players.

These three population groups were chosen solely for the reason that they are "captive populations" that will facilitate project implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

The cost / benefits will be assessed and if favourable, may lead to extension of the project to the rest of the nation and to other Pacific Island Countries.

**MEN AS PARTNERS**  
ACHIEVING REPRODUCTIVE AND FAMILY HEALTH FOR ALL

*Appendix 3: Men as Partners Promotional Poster*

# MEN AS PARTNERS IN REPRODUCTIVE & FAMILY HEALTH



*he loves; he cares; he shares;  
he's always there*



**M.A.P.S PROJECT. R.F.H.A.F / N.Z.E.P.A  
FUNDED BY N.Z.O.D.A / U.N.E.P.A**

THE REPRODUCTIVE & FAMILY HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF FIJI  
ROOMS 3-4, 1ST FLOOR, MARSLY'S BUILDING, ELIERY STREET, SUVA,  
P.O. BOX 17259, SUVA. PHONE: 306175. FAX: 306178  
TAUTOKA OFFICE, 1ST FLOOR, BAYLY TRUST BUILDING,  
NEDE STREET, TAUTOKA. PHONE/FAX: 631411

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