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Engaging or changing men? Understandings of masculinity and change in the new 'Men, Peace and Security' agenda

Abstract: *The harmful and inequitable implications of men's actions have always been a central focus of the United Nation's Women, Peace and Security agenda. Despite this, until recently, there have been few programmes in the agenda which attempt to directly work with men. The past five years have seen a rapid growth of programming that explicitly targets men and even calls for a 'Men, Peace and Security' agenda. This article analyses how these programmes understand their work. Drawing on expert interviews and documentary analysis it argues that current programming reflects two fundamentally different approaches, engaging or changing men. While these two perspectives are not mutually exclusive, they reflect different understandings of what and 'Men, Peace and Security' agenda should prioritise. In exploring the tension between these two approaches the article concludes that without greater coherence and clarity the MPS agenda risks being ineffective or even producing harmful outcomes.*

Keywords: Women, peace and security; masculinities; United Nations; peacebuilding; violence prevention.

Over the past 19 years, the growth of the United Nations (UN) Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda has been one of the most marked transformations for policy-makers, practitioners, and activists working on conflict transformation.[1] The WPS agenda is a global policy architecture which guides states' response to violent conflict.[2] Its core component, outlined in United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, 'urges all actors to increase the participation of women and incorporate gender perspectives in all United Nations peace and security efforts.'[3] Despite the call for the incorporation of a gender

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[1] Maria-Adriana Deiana and Kenneth McDonagh, ''It is important, but…': translating the Women Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda into the planning of EU peacekeeping missions', *Peacebuilding*, 6 no.1 (2018): 34-48.
[2] Nicola Pratt, and Sophie Richter-Devroe, 'Critically examining UNSCR 1325 on women, peace and security', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 13 no.4 (2011): 489-503.
[3] Laura Shepherd, Power and authority in the production of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. *International Studies Quarterly*, 52 no.2 (2008): 383-404; Susan Willett, Introduction: Security Council Resolution 1325: assessing the impact on women, peace and security. *International peacekeeping*, 17 no.2, (2010): 142-158; Claire Duncanson, *Gender and Peacebuilding* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2016); Jacqui True, *Women, peace and security in post-conflict and peacebuilding contexts*. (Oslo: Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre Policy Brief, 2013); Laura Shepherd, *Gender, UN peacebuilding, and the politics of space: locating legitimacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017); Nicole George, & Laura Shepherd, Women,

perspective, until recently policy responses have tended to treat 'gender' as a synonym for stereotypical 'women's issues'.[4] This tendency has meant that the pernicious impact of harmful masculinities on post-conflict societies has often been overlooked while women's empowerment programs have been highlighted.[5] The failure to address harmful masculinities is particularly problematic due to the well-established link between harmful notions of masculinity and gendered insecurity after conflict.[6] To redress this oversight, activists have called for a distinct 'Men, Peace and Security' (MPS) agenda to supplement the existing WPS architecture.[7]

Advocates for MPS argue that the inclusion of men will make masculinity visible in a policy agenda which has tended to focus on the gendered insecurities women face, while often equivocating on the precise causes of gendered insecurity.[8] Calls for WPS to explicitly focus on men have resulted in two recent United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR) including language around 'engaging' or 'enlisting' men.[9] These inclusions have coincided with an increased attention to engaging men as agents of feminist change in the international

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peace and security: Exploring the implementation and integration of UNSCR 1325. *International Political Science Review*, 37 no.3 (2016): 297-306.

[4] Jamie Hagen, 'Queering women, peace and security', *International Affairs,* 92 no.2 (2016): 313-332.

[5] Cynthia Cockburn, 'War and security, women and gender: An overview of the issues', *Gender & Development* 21 no.3 (2013): 433-452; Donna Pankhurst, ''What is wrong with men?': revisiting violence against women in conflict and peacebuilding', *Peacebuilding* 4, no.2, (2016): 180-193; Brandon Hamber, 'Masculinity and transitional justice: An exploratory essay', *The International Journal of Transitional Justice*, 1, no.3, (2007): 375-390.

[6] Ken Harland & Sam McCready, ''Stuck' between ceasefires and peacebuilding: Finding positive responses to young men's experiences of violence, and personal safety', *Shared Space: A research journal on peace, conflict and community relations in Northern Ireland*, (2010): 49-63; Fidelma Ashe & Ken Harland, 'Troubling masculinities: changing patterns of violent masculinities in a society emerging from political conflict', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 37, no.9, (2014): 747-762; Fidelma Ashe, 'Masculinities, Political Transition and Power: A Case Study of Northern Ireland', in Rebecca Anne Barr, Sean Brady, and Jane McGaughey *Ireland and Masculinities in History: An introduction*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 273-292; David Duriesmith, ''Nothing is clear now': Negotiating equality and colonialism through the lives of twelve Acehnese men', in Michael Flood and Richard Howson (eds.) *Engaging Men in Building Gender Equality*, (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015): 135-143.

[7] Callum Watson, 'Begging the question: What would a men, peace and security agenda look like?', Connections: The Quarterly Journal, 14 no.3 (2015): 45-60; United States Institute for Peace, *Men, peace, and security symposium: Agents of change* (Washington DC: United States Institute for Peace, 2013), https://www.usip.org/events/men-peace-and-security-symposium-agents-change.

[8] Paul Kirby and Laura Shepherd, 'The futures past of the Women, Peace and Security agenda', *International Affairs*, 92 no.2 (2016): 373-392.

[9] Outside of the WPS framework there is a longer history of attempts to engage men and boys at the United Nations. These include the 1995 Beijing Declaration which included the call to 'encourage men to participate fully in all actions towards equality.'

arena.[10] Despite the increased attention being paid to men, the notion of MPS remains contested. Some advocates have rejected the term on the basis that it reinforces the binary between men and women in the agenda, or that it will distract from women's dire needs (as one participant stated "there has been a men, peace and security agenda from the dawn of time, but it's just been called security"). While others argue that the creation of a distinct MPS agenda will create new opportunities to challenge harmful masculinities in a focused way while addressing the particular gendered vulnerabilities that some men face. For the sake of this article, the terminology of MPS has been adopted as a shorthand to refer to the constellation of work which focuses on the 'the other side of gender' to promote peace and security.[11]

The new turn to men within WPS policy has led to the rapid proliferation of programs which directly target men in order to promote gender-equitable forms of peace and security.[12] These programs are diverse, but have most commonly focused on challenging oppressive notions of masculinity in conflict-affected sites.[13] Though these programs have gained significant funding and attention over the past years, so far there has been little academic scholarship on how these practical attempts to enact a MSP fit within the broader goals of the WPS agenda.[14] Existing work from Henri Myrttinen and Callum Watson have explored some of the reasons why it has taken so long for concrete efforts address men and boys in WPS to develop.[15] Additionally a recent contribution from Hannah Wright has explored attempts to integrate a masculinities perspective into the United Kingdom National Action Plan 2018-2022 and Jolynn Shoemaker

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[10] Kirby and Shepherd, 'The futures past of the Women, Peace and Security agenda'

[11] Joseph Vess, Gary Barker, Sanam Naraghi-Anderlini and Alexa Hassink, *The other side of gender: men as critical agents of change* (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2013), http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR340.pdf

[12] There are four pillars of the WPS agenda prevention, protection, participation and relief and recovery. The place of work on men and boys in these pillars is explained later in the article.

[13] Henri Myrttinen, Jana Naujoks and Judy El-Bushra, *Re-thinking gender in peacebuilding* (London: International Alert, 2014).

[14] Recent examples include Henri Myrttinen, 'Locating masculinities in WPS', in Sara Davies & Jacqui True (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Women, Peace, and Security,* (Oxford University Press: New York, 2019), 88-97; Callum Watson, 'Begging the question' (2015): 45-60; Hannah Wright, 'Masculinities perspectives': advancing a radical Women, Peace and Security agenda?' *International Feminist Journal of Politics* (forthcoming), David Duriesmith, "Engaging Men and Boys in the Women, Peace and Security Agenda: Beyond the "Good Men" Industry". LSE Women, Peace and Security Working Paper 11/2017. (London: LSE WPS Centre, 2017).

[15] Callum Watson, 'Begging the question' (2015): 45-60; Henri Myrttinen, 'Locating masculinities in WPS', (2019): 88-97.

& Sahana Dharmapuri have analysed the growth of male advocates of WPS.[16] While these studies have been clearly shown why it has taken so long for a MPS agenda to launch, and begun to explore some particular dynamics (in male advocates and the UK NAP), little remains known about how masculinities are framed in MPS work more broadly. To better appreciate the position of men in the agenda, this article asks: how has masculinity been understood in WPS policy and programming, and how do these understandings shape the delivery of programs designed to engage men?

To answer this question, this article examines these early attempts to place men in the WPS policy and practice, arguing that currents programs risk being counter-productive due to their tendency to rely on simplistic, contradictory or problematic analysis of masculinity. By exploring expert interviews, policy documents and training manuals the article argues that a tension exists between MPS programming which focuses on engaging men as allies and those who centre the need to dismantle dominant masculinities performed by those in positions of power. While acknowledging the impediments faced by those trying to deliver MPS programming in often hostile environments (both in terms of funding and of participants in programmes) the article argues that a more radical approach is needed. The article concludes that for MPS work to make a valuable contribution to feminist peace it should prioritise transforming masculinities which are privileged in security, policy and humanitarian sectors.

Research method

While much of the recent scholarship on WPS has highlighted the importance of working with men to achieve the goals of the agenda, little empirical work has been conducted on the development or scope of current activities which aim to achieve this.[17] This is a challenging task as the boundaries of what counts as 'MPS work' remain blurry. There are a significant number of organisations which explicitly brand their work in relation to WPS, including Promundo and the MenEngage Alliance. However, there are also organisations who have been integral to the growth of work with men and boys from a gendered perspective to address issues around peace and security that tend not to mention WPS explicitly in their public-facing

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[16] Jolynn Shoemaker and Sahana Dharmapuri, *Not the usual suspects: Engaging male champions of Women, Peace and Security*, (Broomfield, CO, Our Secure Future, 2017); Hannah Wright, 'Masculinities perspectives': advancing a radical Women, Peace and Security agenda?' *International Feminist Journal of Politics* (forthcoming).

[17] What recent publications have discussed the growth of MPS tend to cite visible examples of actors who do WPS work, such as the growth of the MenEngage alliance.

documentation, such as the Refugee Law Centre. This has meant that the scope and significance of MPS work remains murky.

To rectify this lack of empirical evidence, thirty-eight semi-structured expert interviews (lasting between 1 and 2.5 hours) were undertaken during 2018 and 2019 with actors who were instrumental in promoting work with men in the WPS agenda. These actors come from diverse backgrounds, but include policy-experts at the United Nations (based in North America, the Middle East, South East Asia and the South Pacific), programme designers from non-governmental organisations, direct practitioners and expert consultants who provide training to government and military officials. Twenty-one of the participants came from the Global North (though seven now resided in the Global South) seventeen came from the Global South. While most participants preferred to remain anonymous (particularly those who were very critical of the engagement approach) the cohort included practitioners who have done important early work in advocating for programming on men and boys (such as Sanam Naraghi-Anderlini and Henri Myrttinen), representatives from the key international organisations involved in programming (such as Gary Barker the president and CEO of Promundo, Joni van de Sand the Global Director of the Men Engage Alliance) and local practitioners working on implementation of this work (such as Paulo Baleinakorodawa the executive director of Transcend Oceania and Shamima Ali from the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre).

The participants were selected through a snowball sampling method starting with a handful of prominent figures who had been at the forefront of MPA work and contacts from my previous academic work and work with Partners for Prevention on egalitarian masculinities in Aceh.[18] Each set of participants were asked for advice on further participants who had influenced their work, or who were conducting important work in the area. While I was able to collect interviews with major organisations working on MPS there are a few notable exceptions (such as the Refugee Law Project in Uganda). The twenty-five of the interviews were conducted remotely, while an additional thirteen in-person interviews were conducted in Fiji and Indonesia in conjunction with other fieldwork.

The participants reported different pathways into work on the topic. This included seven who had long-track records of doing pro-feminist work with men, four who had worked extensively on sexual violence against men, three who had worked as gender experts in organisations that

[18] David Duriesmith, ''Nothing is clear now' (2015): 135-143.

worked with state security forces, and fifteen with a background in the women's peace movement. Others had transitioned into the MPS space after working on violent extremism, disaster relief, economic development or peacebuilding from a non-gendered perspective. Many participants had received training at some point from a small number of prominent experts affiliated with Promundo, The MenEngage Alliance, and/or Sonke Gender Justice. The participants work across the globe, from guiding UNSCRs in Washington, shaping North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) responses to the agenda and designing regional interventions in the Middle East and North Africa, Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Latin America, Pacific Island Countries, and South East Asia.

The interviews focused on three distinct areas. First, they explored how the participants came to work on men and the WPS agenda, this included questioning about any training they received, what initiatives they had worked on, and their current involvement in MPS work. Second, they were asked about the core concepts that guided their work. This included querying what they understood masculinity/ies to be, what they believed the MPS agenda should achieve, and how they conceptualised related concepts such as 'positive masculinity', 'gender equality' or 'toxic masculinity.' Finally, they were asked about how they understood the goals of work with men in the WPS agenda. This included questions about what they believed to be examples of best practice, what they understood to be bad examples MPS work, and how they understood the relationship between MPS and other related areas (work with youth, work with diverse communities based on sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) communities, work on conflict-related disability, etc.). These interviews have been supplemented with an analysis of policy documents, reports and training manuals to chart how the agenda is translating into concrete initiative which work to engage men in the agenda.[19]

This research does not allow me to conclude that I have fully captured the nuances of all the work being carried out on the ground, or that I have provided a comprehensive history of attempts to construct a MPS agenda. Rather the following discussion is presented as a first

[19] These included documentation from UNFPA, UNDP, UN Women, the United State Institute of Peace, the MenEngage Alliance, Promundo, Sonke Gender Justice, CARE, the Refugee Law Project, International Alert, the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance, the Oak Foundation, Saferworld, Conciliation Resources, and Women Without Boarders. Though many of the documents are public available others were provided by participants directly.

effort to understand how WPS policies and programmes which target men have developed and the dominant trends present in work with men.

The development of the MPS agenda

In their 2016 review of WPS Paul Kirby and Laura Shepherd identified the development of a MPS agenda as one of the three fundamental shifts which could reshape women, peace and security.[20] The first explicit mention of men in UNSCR resolutions appeared in 2013, with Resolution 2106, which mentioned 'the enlistment of men and boys in the effort to combat all forms of violence against women.' Resolution 2106 was followed up in 2015 by Resolution 2242, which reiterated 'the important engagement by men and boys as partners in promoting women's participation in the prevention and resolution of armed conflict, peacebuilding and post-conflict situations.' However, interviews indicated that efforts to include language around men and boys in the WPS agenda had been present far before this, with activists such as Sanam Naraghi-Anderlini advocating for the original UNSCR on WPS to mirror language in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action on gender equality around 'engaging men.' Similarly efforts were mounted in relation to later resolutions such as 1820 (which focused on sexual and gender based violence (SGBV)) to include explicit mention of violence against men and boys, which was not included until the 2019 resolution 2467 which explicitly named 'men and boys' as potential victims.[21] However, each of these earlier efforts were thwarted either by conservative states such as Libya who saw the framing as too radical, or by women's peace activists who saw it as potentially diluting the agenda (as one UN participant explained "lots of WPS actors" saw inclusion of men "take it off track"). Due to the lack of explicit WPS architecture addressing men and boys prior to 2013 a range of actors began informally developing gender-focused work on men and boys in conflict settings from the mid-2000s. Through this earlier programming tended not to explicitly mention WPS, it replicated the language in previous WPS resolutions and included initiatives which were funded by the UN. It appears that these have been primarily by the United Nations Development Program and not UN Women. One participant from UN Women who had been involved in the agenda for more than fifteen years

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[20] Paul Kirby and Laura Shepherd, 'The futures past of the Women, Peace and Security agenda', *International Affairs*, 92 no.2 (2016): 373-392.

[21] Kimberly Theidon '1325 + 17 = ?: Filling in the Blanks of the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda', in Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, Naomi Cahn, Dina Francesca Haynes, and Nahla Valji, eds., The Oxford Handbook of Gender and Conflict, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018): 145-156.

explained that until recently the organisation had been wary of programmes targeting men because they were concerned that it might be used to justify reducing funding which was specifically earmarked for women. Since resolutions 2106 & 2242 were passed, programs targeting men have grown within all four 'pillars' of the WPS agenda (prevention, protection, participation and relief and recovery).[22]

Participants reported that the most wide-spread and well-funded set of MPS initiatives are violence prevention programs in conflict affected sites. These programs work at a community level to challenge violent norms associated with masculinity and to engage men as agents of change.[23] The second set of programming focuses on the participation pillar are male champion initiatives which worked with male policy-makers and political leaders to support women's involvement in decision-making.[24] These initiatives are highly visible due to the participation of male state leaders and high-ranking diplomatic staff, but are not as extensive or well-funded as prevention programming.[25] Third, there are programs which fit under the protection pillar, which include gender-sensitivity training for state security personnel being delivered by organisations like Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, Sonke Gender Justice and International Alert.[26] These programs are either included as part of security sector reform initiatives in post-conflict states, or were run within countries that had become proactive in the WPS agenda such as the NATO states. Finally, there are relief and recovery programs which focus on treating men after conflict.[27] This last category appeared to be the least common and well-funded. My research was only able to identify significant initiatives within a handful of countries despite the growing attention to SGBV against men and boys.[28]

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[22] Though these are the most common four pillars identified within the agenda, Kirby and Shepherd also note that the relief and recovery pillar is often swapped for peacekeeping and that occasionally a fifth 'normative' pillar is sometimes added. Paul Kirby and Laura Shepherd, Reintroducing women, peace and security, p.249.
[23] USIP, *Men, peace, and security symposium* Joseph Vess, Gary Barker, Sanam Naraghi-Anderlini and Alexa Hassink, *The other side of gender.*
[24] Shoemaker & Dharmapuri, *Not the usual suspects*.
[25] David Duriesmith, 'Manly states and feminist foreign policy: Rethinking the liberal state as an agent of change', in Swati Parashar, Anne Tickner and Jacqui True, eds., *Rethinking Gendered States*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018b): 51-68.
[26] PfPC SSRWG and EDWG, *Handbook on Teaching Gender in the Military* (Geneva: DCAF and PfPC, 2016);
[27] See Phillip Schulz, Displacement from gendered personhood: sexual violence and masculinities in northern Uganda. *International Affairs*, 94 no.5 (2018): 1101-1119. For more detail about some of this contemporary work.
[28] For example, see: Maryisa Zalewski, Paula Drumond, Elisabeth Prugl, and Maria Stern, eds. *Sexual violence against men in global politics*. (New York: Routledge, 2018); Kimberly Theidon, 2016. 'Conclusion:

As previously noted, establishing parameters for what should be included as part of MPS was challenging. To begin with programming which worked with men and boys that was explicitly framed in relation to WPS was included (this included work from organisations like DCAF, Promundo, Sonke Gender Justice and ABAAD) constituted the bulk of initiatives analysed. Other programming was also included when it did not explicitly use the terminology of WPS but targeted men to directly address the impacts of militarisation or conflict (such as the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre's male advocate programme). The decision to include this kind of programming is also because very little work which would likely now be branded as MPS explicitly named the agenda prior to 2015 even when its explicitly scope is archetypically within the agenda (in addressing the impact of conflict or militarisation on masculinity, and the impact of masculinity on militarisation or conflict). As work with men recently begun to be framed as part of WPS, and because the boundaries between what is WPS programming and broader gender work in relation to peace or security tends to be porous, a somewhat expansive definition has been adopted. This includes all recent programming directly targeting men and boys from a gender perspective with the intention of advancing the goals of the WPS agenda.[29] As this research is focused on MPS programming national policies or national action plans have been excluded, these different framings have begun to be explored by Hannah Wright's pioneering work on the integration of masculinities perspectives in the United Kingdom's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.[30]

The growth of MPS work has come from two directions. On the one hand there has been an increasing role of small, nationally-based non-governmental organisations (NGOs) who specialise on working with men and have recently transitioned into the WPS space (these include Transcend Oceania in Fiji, ABAAD in Lebanon, and the Refugee Law Program in Uganda). The second set includes a number of larger, trans-national organisations who have invested heavily in MPS work as the new frontier of their existing efforts. This latter group includes organisations that have traditionally been concerned with other aspects of global development and violence prevention. For example when asked how Promundo got involved

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Reflections on the women, peace, and security agenda' in Victoria Sanford, Katerina Stefatos, Cecilia M. Salvi, eds., Gender violence in peace and war: states of complicity. (London: Rutgers University Press, 2016): 184–197, Lewis Turner, "Are Syrian Men Vulnerable Too? Gendering The Syria Refugee Response", November 29, 2016, http://www.mei.edu/content/map/are-syrian-men-vulnerable-too-gendering-syria-refugee-response accessed 14/05/2019

[29] Henri Myrttinen, 'Locating masculinities in WPS', (2019): 88-97.

[30] Hannah Wright, 'Masculinities perspectives' (forthcoming).

in work on WPS their co-founder and CEO Gary Barker explained that it was not originally a "conscious decision", but rather that as they begun to do research and run programming in settings with high rates of violence (such as favelas in Brazil and in South Africa) it naturally arose. After having done some early work on the link between gang violence and masculinity it snowballed. As the staff at Promundo were some "of the handful of people who talk about masculinities in conflict in an applied way" they began to be invited to do work with the World Bank and UNDP who wanted to run further gender programmes in direct conflict settings.

As work on masculinities has grown in visibility international funders such as the Oak Foundation have shifted their priorities to include 'engaging men' as a central pillar of their existing anti-violence work.[31] Similarly significant funders such as the United Nations Population Fund, the United Kingdom, the United States and the Nordic states all provide significant support to organisations focused on MPS. This funding has also seen the expansion of smaller organisations with specialised expertise on running masculinities programming in conflict-affected states. Participants were asked about the funding landscape for work on MPS and has conflicting views about the role of funding in its growth. About half of the participants reported that there had been a growth in interest from funders but that the expansion was not donor led (this was the view taken by interviews from practitioners in Lebanon, Fiji, and Indonesia). However, one interview from a UN Women policy-maker qualified this view, explaining that "I haven't seen reluctance from donors. What I see is reluctance from practitioners. I am sure if there were more programme proposals then donors would fund them…I haven't seen a single case where someone proposes a project engaging men and a donor who works on gender has said no." Similarly one participant from the women's peace movement argued that the growth on men and boys was "the sexy new thing" and that women's organisations were being forced to divert their attention from women and girls. This view was challenged by others, such as one practitioner who was working with male victims of gender-based violence, who argued that some activists had incorrectly come to the belief that "nobody gives a shit about the women suddenly now; we all have to care about the men." Nine of the participants reported that they had to actively fight against the perception that MPS work was driven by funders. One practitioner from South-East Asia described the concern that funding was being taken away from women and girls was a "London-based policy debate" and not

[31] Oak Foundation, 'Our strategy', *Oak Foundation*, accessed 20 October 2017, http://oakfnd.org/cap-strategy.html

reflective of the organic growth of MPS work on the ground. Despite disagreements about where the push was coming from, all thirty-eight participants agreed that interest in MPS work was growing and that direct programming was expanding.

In scoping the extent of work for this project is soon became apparent that current efforts drew on three competing understandings of what the MPS agenda might achieve. A significant number of programs begun from a starting point that the MPS agenda was primarily about engaging men, that is drawing on them as a resource to advance the broader agendas of the WPS agenda. Secondly, there were programs which framed the MPS agenda as primarily about changing men who either were perpetrators, or potential perpetrators that caused gender-based insecurity. Finally, there were a smaller set of efforts which framed the MPS agenda in terms of recognising men as a group who faced distinct forms of gendered insecurity themselves, which needed to be recognised and addressed. These goals were not always discrete, with some initiatives undertaking some combination of the three. But the differing articulations of the MPS agenda raises the question of how men, masculinity and change are understood, and how these understandings shape the programming which is being delivered.

Understandings of masculinity and change in the MPS agenda

When evaluating policy documents from organisations who work on MPS definitions of masculinity and explicit analysis of how masculinity related to women, peace and security were rare, while vague references to 'toxic', 'violent', or 'hyper' masculinity were all present.[32] This analysis was often vague, containing mixed messages about what masculinity is and why it is harmful. One example of this ambiguity which can be seen in programme documentation can be see CARE's 2013 training *Module 501: Engaging Men and Boys for Gender Equality.* The document emphasises that gender equality is a state in which men and women are free to 'make choices without limitations set by predefined stereotypes, gender roles and/or prejudices.' This kind of articulation of the final goal of MPS was also one that many interviewees invoked. Despite this, the goal of limiting predefined stereotypes and gender roles was often not carried through to the actual activities being employed with male participants. CARE's training module for example, outlines a task which separates 'males and females' into same-sex groups and then make statements such as 'I am glad I am a man because…' and then followed by a

[32] These rarely gave any account of what it meant for masculinity to be toxic, violent, or hyper, and tended to rely on broad, common-sense notions of a relationship between harmful gender norms and

statement that 'If I were woman, I could…'. It is clear that these statements are meant to be positive affirmations rather than negative ones:

> 'Make sure that the responses from the participants are positive aspects of their own gender rather than responses that center on not having to experience something the other sex experiences. For example, instead of men in the group making statements like, 'I'm glad I'm a man because I don't have a period,' they could concentrate on statements like 'I'm glad I'm a man because I'm strong.'"[33]

The final stage of this activity is to reflect on these categorical allocations and decide whom they benefit or if they are good. While this task focuses on trying to disaggregate 'good' and 'bad' aspects of gender, the activity and the document is profoundly torn between its stated understanding of gender equality that seems to want to deconstruct gender and actual activities focused on challenging 'bad' masculinity and reinscribing a new 'good' way of being a man. Further, the articulation does little to deconstruct the gender binary or to weaken stigma about women's bodies. Some interviews indicated that this kind of ambiguity can be an intentional strategy to appease funders who are uncomfortable with clearer statements about harmful gender stereotypes. One practitioner who had worked widely on programmes targeting men as victims and on masculinity transformation programmes suggested that programmes which addressed men in positive terms were "easier for people to swallow." Research participants from the United Nations also confirmed that funder and institutional partners were unwilling to make clear statements about mainstream masculinities being problematic, instead preferring board ambiguous statements about men's involvement which sounded positive or the singling out of particular groups of marginalised men. This was seen in one participant who had worked extensively implementing programs in South East Asia explaining that funders where happy to support 'flashy positive messages' about men as champions because they did not contain clear messages about men's responsibility.

Other respondents also explained that imprecise messaging was also intended to avoid alienating potential participants or as a first step in a path towards more holistic attempts to shift masculinities. For example Gary Barker from Promundo explained that this kind of language was often about "choosing your entry points" and that sometimes their approach was

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[33] Allison Burden, Walter Forham, Theresa Hwang, Meredith Pinto and Patrick Welsh, *Gender equity and diversity module five: Engaging men and boys for gender equality* (Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere, Inc., 2013): 32-32.

less radical than they might want "not because we think that is the right way to go, but because we think that is the only conversation we are able to have." Developing a coherent approach also appeared to be challenging for actors like the MenEngage Alliance, due to their diverse membership and the wide range of locations that they worked on. Similarly, a practitioner from Indonesia reported that they were required to take varying approaches depending where in the country they operated, with a more heteronormative and less challenging framing being required in highly conservative sites. This is consistent with similar findings others have made in relation domestic violence prevention programs, which have a tendency to avoid 'accusatory' language which might alienate men.[34]

Other interviewees where more critical of this approach, suggesting that refusing to name masculinity as a problem came from a lack of will to fundamentally challenge security institutions. One participant who had worked in security sector reforms programs explained that articulating a clearer analysis of masculinity "would actually mean questioning the foundations of the institutions we build. It would lead to a fundamental questioning of the security sector and how certain kinds of masculinity are celebrated by our partners." Limiting the language in policy-documents and customising programming to fit funders expectations is not unique to work on masculinity in WPS.[35] However, the use of vague articulations of masculinities appears to have resulted in the reproduction of problematic narratives around masculinity and conflict.

The CARE document's lack of clarity is a representative example of how MPS work which does not have a clear analysis of masculinities can quickly default to the use of gendered stereotypes about the kinds of men are responsible for violence. This kind of reification often takes the form of calls for 'real men' or 'good men' to stand up for women (who must need protection from some 'other' group of men).[36] This work, which has become common in anti-

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[34] Bob Pease, "Disengaging Men from Patriarchy: Rethinking the man question in masculinities studies", in Michael Flood and Richard Howson ed. *Engaging Men in Building Gender Equality*, (London: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015): 55-70.

[35] Sophie Yates, Power, process, plumbing: Big G and small g gender in Victoria's family violence policy subsystem. *Australian Journal of Public Administration*. 77 no.4 (2018): 568-582; Hearn, Jeff. "Uses and abuses of the political category of "men" in activism, policy and theorising." in Michael Flood and Richard Howson ed. *Engaging Men in Building Gender Equality*, (London: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015): 34-54.

[36] Erin Casey, & Tyler Smith, 'How can I not?': Men's pathways to involvement in anti-violence against women work. *Violence Against Women*, 16 no.8, (2010): 953-973.

sexual violence campaigns with young men, relies on a dichotomy between 'good' non-violent masculinity and 'bad' violent masculinity.[37] Interviewees regularly explained that programs sought to encourage young men to adopt 'good masculinity' or 'positive gender norms' which were associated with protection, care or social responsibility. Adopting a 'good men' approach presents particular barriers addressing masculinities in conflict-affected regions. Interviewees indicated that programming regularly relied on the idea of violent masculinity, with one participant explaining the objective of work with men as being to 'diminish the alpha male, Ramboesque, kind of redneck American masculinity and elevate back the elements of what back in the 1950s used to be gentlemanly.' Other participants defended the use of positive role-models who might reinforce other aspects of patriarchal masculinity. One participant who worked for an international NGO working on masculinity transformation argued that "I want to avoid a top-down sort of checklist, but in terms of communication it is helpful to articulate what the alternatives look like." Similarly, Gary Barker explained why in Promundo's work it is sometimes useful to celebrate men who might still exhibit patriarchal traits:

> Let's say we work in a community. There are men there and they seem to be using less violence against their partners, but they continue to be the ones who make household decisions and their income is 50% higher than their female partners, and their not buying into gender equality, and here you are celebrating them for not using violence, isn't that a low threshold? It's a matter of using context. Gender equality is not a 0 or a 1, it's a journey. We've at least got him to stop using violence, and that's ok...He still needs a little bit of celebration saying 'isn't it great that you did it' because he is feeling quite emasculated in the context of displacement

Where this was used strategically it was framed as the first step, as one practitioner explained these kinds of stereotypes were only useful if they helped men to move from saying "my life has improved because I know more about gender and am no longer a violent conflict man' to becoming feminist peace activists."

While the strategic use of gender stereotype was a conscious strategy for some actors (like Promundo and some members of the MenEngage Alliance) others appeared to be less reflective about their use of gender stereotypes. One participant explained that a major country donor had

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[37] Stephen Burrell, 'The contradictory possibilities of engaging men and boys in the prevention of men's violence against women in the UK' *Journal of Gender-Based Violence*, 2 no.3 (2018): 447-464.

asked his organisation to develop 'a check-box list of how to spot toxic masculinity' which relied on stereotyped ideas about the dangers of 'violent Congolese men who beat up their wife and children.' Particularly for actors who did not have a background in working with men and boys outside of WPS (and due to this had been exposed to wider feminist criticism) there appeared to be a risk of reproducing stereotypes about what one participant referred to as "violent brown men" without challenging dominant masculinities in privileged security institutions.

This characterisation of MPS work appears to be consistent with the focus of programming. In my review of policy documents and through the interviews I could finds no significant examples of work which targeted the behaviour of privileged groups of men. The closest examples of this were gender-sensitivity programs being delivered to security personnel, but even in these instances interviewees indicated that they were overwhelmingly delivered to junior personnel and that the "senior guys just don't turn up." One participant in the NGO sector who ran these trainings explained that "pretty much all of the work being done with men is done with men in socio-economically deprived sections of society in conflict-affected and Global South countries." Even work with the security sector appeared to overwhelmingly focus on peacekeepers from Global South countries and former Soviet states who were assumed to be more likely to engage in SGBV.

Where programs do exist that work with powerful men, they focus on recruiting them as agents of change rather than indicating that they may need to change their own behaviour. The privileging of already privileged men in MPS can be most clearly seen in attempts to draw on prominent men as ambassadors for change. Recent efforts to set up a network of Male Allies for Women, Peace and Security have looked to use men in positions of power to support the agenda and create institutional change. While ambassador programs are recent and growing developments in the WPS space, there is a robust body of literature on similar programs as part of national SGBV prevention efforts. Programs such as the White Ribbon Campaign, The Demi and Ashton Foundation's *Real Men Don't Buy Girls* campaign and the recent *HeForShe* campaign have all used publicly recognised men as lived examples of 'good masculinity' for others to emulate.[38] These campaigns risk holding up the examples of

[38] Amy Auguston, 'The problem with 'real men don't buy women'', *The Huffington Post*, 19 July 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/amy-auguston/the-problem-with-real-men-dont-buy-girls_b_5355052.html

privileged men (usually wealthy, white, heterosexual celebrities) as role models that others will listen to, without addressing the role of those men in producing structural inequalities or cultures of violence.[39]

Participants for this project complained about 'big old guys who have zero track record' on WPS beginning to position themselves as champions of the agenda. This is problematic because these highly privileged men rarely saw their involvement as requiring any substantial change in their own behaviour. Rather, participants suggested these men had seen an opportunity to "be the big hero" by appearing to care about preventing SGBV, or as one analyst put it "why are we empowering these already empowered men?". Research on violent masculinities in conflict settings has consistently emphasised that the desire to assert status as 'real men' in contexts where men have few opportunities or political options is a key driver of violence.[40] The valorisation of privileged men in the Global North does not escape this dynamic, it reinforces the importance of young men becoming 'real men' while offering no meaningful options for them to achieve the kind of material power which WPS ambassadors for change wield.

Those participants who rejected an engagement approach argued that for MPS to have any value it needed to focus on more profound transformations of dominant masculinity, or as one participant explained challenging "masculinity ideology resonates with me much more than trying to pick male 'allies' who can push women into leadership spaces." Those participants who were most critical of an engagement approach argued it was not just exceptionally violent men who were should focus on, but on the kind of everyday masculinities which shape peace and security institutions, or as one (understandably anonymous) participant put it "its not just the young guy smoking cigarettes on the corner that's the problem, its my boss." Particularly for the participants who had worked directly on male vulnerabilities and those with expertise

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[39] Kate Seymour, 'Cowards' and 'Scumbags': Tough Talk and Men's Violence. International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy, 7 no.4 (2018): 132-147;

[40] John Brewer, *Peace processes: A sociological approach*. (Cambridge: Polity, 2010); Curtis Holland, and Gordana Rabrenovic, 'Masculinities in Transition? Exclusion, Ethnosocial Power, and Contradictions in Excombatant Community-based Peacebuilding in Northern Ireland', *Men and Masculinities*, 21 no.5 (2018) 729-755; Marjoke Oosterom, 'Gendered (in) security in South Sudan: masculinities and hybrid governance in Imatong state', *Peacebuilding*, 5 no.2 (2017): 186-202; Antonia Porter, ''What is constructed can be transformed': Masculinities in post-conflict societies in Africa', *International Peacekeeping*, 20 no.4 (2013): 486-506; Henri Myrttinen, 'Stabilizing or Challenging Patriarchy? Sketches of Selected "New" Political Masculinities', *Men and Masculinities*, pre-publication version available online (2018).

on SOGI there was the view that an engagement approach had failed to address heteronormativity or dominant masculinity which contributed to gendered violence. These participants shared Jamie Hagen's concern that WPS reinforces heteronormativity.[41] Or, as Miki Wali a participant from Haus of Khameleon (a trans rights organisation in Fiji) quipped "you see David, the thing about 1325 is that it is just very heterosexual."

This tension between engagement approaches and critics is reflective of the tension between efforts to engage men or transform masculinities in work with men to combat SGBV domestically, which has also been criticised as tending to focus on "conscripting boys and men with the least amount of social power …due to either their youth or their relative disadvantage."[42] The engagement approach has been widely criticised within the literature on SGBV outside of WPS. Because of this, participants from groups which specialised on masculinities had actively considered the risk that an engagement approach work might reinforce existing hierarchies, as one participant response when asked if their work risked recentring already powerful men "we have to answer that criticism on a weekly basis".[43] Those who were most critical of this approach, suggested that by holding up powerful men as legitimate, reformed and pro-feminist "gendermen" is likely to make it harder for feminist activists to challenge security instructions, policy-makers and the humanitarian sector who treat gendered insecurity as unimportant or a niche issue.[44] Or as Henri Myrtinnen has argued elsewhere critics of an engagement approach see it as stabilizing patriarchy, rather than challenging it by appearing to soften its sharper edges.[45]

While emphasising the critiques of an engagement approach I am also conscious of what those who advocate for it would (and do) say in response. Some would agree with a participant who was involved in programme design that "there is a discrepancy between work on the ground and how it is approached from an academic perspective" and that some compromises are worth making. Others would argue that despite the limitations outlined above, it remains necessary

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[41] Jamie Hagen, 'Queering women, peace and security' (2016)
[42] Michael Salter, ''Real men don't hit women': Constructing masculinity in the prevention of violence against women', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology,* 49 no.1 (2016): 463-479.
[43] Bob Pease, *Undoing privilege: Unearned advantage in a divided world* (London: Zed Books, 2013); Stephen Burrell *Engaging men and boys in the prevention of men's violence against women in England* (Doctoral dissertation, Durham University, 2019); Michael Flood, 'Involving men in efforts to end violence against women', *Men and masculinities*, 14 no.3 (2011): 358-377.
[44] Henri Myrttinen, 'Stabilizing or Challenging Patriarchy? (2018).
[45] ibid

from a harm-reduction perspective, a kind of triage rather than a panacea to patriarchy. These tensions are likely to also reflect a broader fault line in the politics of WPS, between those who see it as a radical agenda aimed to challenging patriarchal militarism and those who see it as a narrow agenda about limiting SGBV in conflict or promoting women decision-makers.[46] Despite this, my findings tend to affirm Hannah Wright's conclusion that when taken as a limited objective the inclusion of a masculinities perspective in WPS is likely to "serve to legitimate, rather than undermine" forms of state militarism which many feminist scholars see as harmful.[47]

Conclusion

Studying the recent attempts to engage men in the WPS agenda has suggested the promise of the agenda, while highlighting the enduring challenges it faces. As with other areas of the WPS agenda those working towards a MPS agenda expressed different goals, methods and political commitments.[48] While the tensions outlined above are not unique to work with men and boys within WPS, they are likely to create additional challenges considering the origins and nature of MPS. The MPS agenda did not arise out of an autonomous men's peace movement (like WPS did from the women's peace movement), because of this there has not been a similar process of public debate and discussion about its goals and objectives. Further, because the formal WPS resolutions only mention men in fleeting and vague ways there is the likelihood that MPS will continue to be drawn on for incompatible objectives. The existing references to 'engaging' or 'enlisting' men say little about what this might look like, and provide no clarity on how men's vulnerabilities might fit within a WPS framework.

At the same time as these tensions are unresolved, MPS interventions are growing rapidly and an increasing number of actors who do not have a depth of expertise on working with men from a feminist perspective are expanding into this space. The ambiguity present in many interventions (strategic or otherwise) risk establishing standards for an emerging MPS agenda that replicates the failing of WPS more broadly. What might be a conscious choice taken as a first step in a long road of change for well-established actors like Promundo risks becoming the best practice standard for state and military actors who want to establish another metric of success in satisficing their WPS obligations. Similarly, the framings of male advocacy and

[46] Paul Kirby and Laura Shepherd, 'The futures past of the Women, Peace and Security agenda'
[47] Hannah Wright, 'Masculinities perspectives' (forthcoming).
[48] Paul Kirby and Laura Shepherd, 'The futures past of the Women, Peace and Security agenda'

allyship risk being co-opted as the latest tool in making WPS into yet another UN with men at its centre, rather than as a tool make gender legible in make existing male-dominated sites of peace and security. At worst the growth of a MPS agenda risks providing another site for patriarchal military institutions to frame themselves as reformed 'good men' who can protect women and girls from the truly violent men does little to advance the original goals of WPS.[49] At best, it might provide the site for a long-needed conversation about the enduring legitimacy and power of patriarchal masculinity (both in the halls of power and the sites of war). This article has not intended to provide a comprehensive or conclusive analysis on the nexus between men, masculinity, peace and security. However, by charting the growth of MPS programming and the different understandings of masculinity and change held by those involved in its growth the article has intended to show the potential and the challenges the agenda faces.

[49] David Duriesmith and Georgina Holmes, 'The masculine logic of DDR and SSR in the Rwanda Defence Force', *Security Dialogue*, 50 no.4 (2019) 361-379.