

# Making It Real: Gender Equity and Diversity Newsletter



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## Welcome...

to the latest edition of CARE USA's Gender Equity and Diversity Newsletter! The newsletter includes reflections on engaging men and boys in our gender programming. To be included in the next issue, please send your ideas or updates by November 5, 2012 to Doris Bartel, Sr. Dir. of Gender and Empowerment in the Human Resources and Administration division at [dbartel@care.org](mailto:dbartel@care.org) or Allison Burden, Sr. Advisor GED in the Global Support Services division at [aburden@care.org](mailto:aburden@care.org).

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## Evolving Fatherhood: How fathers in a country on the brink of progress can tip the scales *By Ariel Frisancho Arroyo*

When thinking about fatherhood, I first think about the picture you see here. This photo depicts one of the highlights of my life.

As a father and doctor, I am personally and professionally passionate about providing healthcare for mothers. Yet, for families to thrive, all fathers need to engage with birth and childrearing, and policy makers must commit to providing better maternal healthcare to all communities.

I think about my wife's labor, and then I think about the women I have helped give birth in poor or rural areas in Peru. There are many roadblocks here to a safe, happy birth experience. For instance, fathers are forbidden in the delivery rooms in all public hospitals. I remember how scared and insecure many rural indigenous women in the Peruvian Andes seemed when they were not allowed to have their partners with them as they gave birth.

Fathers should also be more interested and involved in the health of their wives and newborns. In the indigenous areas especially, maternal health is understood as "a women's issue," due in part to the culture of "machismo" that is prevalent throughout the country.

Many times I have heard at obstetric clinics "Congratulations! Here is your baby. You're a father now." That is not the case: fatherhood doesn't begin with the baby's arrival. Fatherhood begins the moment the couple confirms they are expecting, and it should be a matter of team work from the very beginning. Men should bear in mind that our bond with our future children begins during pregnancy.

I remember how I devoured books and magazines about how to prepare for our baby's arrival. I wanted to be helpful in promoting a healthy pregnancy. Moreover, I wanted to communicate with our baby, and let him know that a loving couple was enthusiastically waiting for his arrival. However, the books and magazines were only addressed to future mothers; we need to focus on fathers' roles too.

There are important changes happening among the young people of the Andes. Increasingly, men are learning how to share this process with their wives or partners, and are getting involved to ensure healthy pregnancies. Communities are also pressing for public hospitals to allow the father's presence during delivery.

Safe and respectful maternal healthcare not only brings happiness to individual families, but is a key driver of progress in our communities and society. Inadequate healthcare for new mothers is an injustice of the modern world, and a human rights violation. In order to bridge this gap, it is essential that policy makers step forward, and fathers become partners in progress.



My wife Duniska and I smiling and holding our brand new baby at the surgical table.

## Making It Real

### Promoting Citizen Advocacy through popular art and culture – experiences from CARE Sri Lanka's Men Engagement Initiatives

By Priyan Seneviratne

EMERGE is a CARE International Sri Lanka initiative that engages men and youth to promote gender equality in their communities. In February 2012 EMERGE formed two forum theatre (FT) groups comprising of men and women community members. Each group caters to an audience speaking either of the main languages, taking into account the cultural and ethnic diversity of the country. These groups help create dialog about the consequences of gender based violence and prevention. But their influence has grown; in just six months they have become popular, working with state and non state organizations in Sri Lanka and have conducted 30 performances on domestic violence, discrimination and gender based violence at work place, state accountability etc.

For me the FT is unique because it forms a nexus between citizen based advocacy and evidence based imagery channelled through performance art.

The FTs are home-grown initiatives with collective ownership that gives communities the prerogative to tackle issues that hinder their wellbeing. As such they are an emerging form of citizen based advocacy or activism intended at upholding the rights of vulnerable groups and transforming relationships. The theatres do this by using evidence based imagery to create an interactive dialog. In other words, they gather first-hand information about issues that are prevalent in their communities and turn an issue into a series of acts.

The first performance tells the story followed by a second, where the audience is invited to intervene in order to change the situation and address the issue. As a result, their advocacy becomes both participatory and collective.

The most important aspect is the use of strong imagery. Imagery becomes the language of all, irrespective of education level or social class. In Freire's seminal work the 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' he confers the significance of identifying themes that could facilitate 'culture group' discussions for all, irrespective of the level of education. The FT creates this opportunity by using common language to surface vital issues that demand the attention of communities, the state and non state service providers.

One of the performances that I saw was about a family where the mother migrates in search of work to another country whilst the two daughters are left with an alcoholic father. In the end the eldest daughter gets raped by a drunkard 'friend' of her father leading her to commit suicide. The story highlighted the domineering stereotypical position held by the father within the household. He prides himself for being the breadwinner but nevertheless exploits his wife and his daughters to buy alcohol. He and his 'friend' manage to convince his wife to go abroad and later his daughter falls prey to the same 'friend'. Masculinity can be difficult to explain and how it affects us, but this story grappled with this issue and engaged the audience showing how forms of masculinity can lead to violence and ultimately the destruction of the family unit. It also provided space for them to think about what is happening in their own lives and become active citizens within their communities to make it a better place for all.

### CARE Men Talk *by Walter Fordham*

"Men aren't the majority in CARE-Atlanta anymore; it's a bit unsettling." "CARE is becoming a women's organization; where does that leave me as a man?" This is a sampling of the whispers I heard among CARE male staff in 2010. As a male CARE employee myself, I wondered if I shared any of those views.

As a Gender Equity & Diversity (GED) advisor and Human Resources facilitator I also wondered: did I have a role in addressing these thoughts that I was sure many men at CARE shared? I decided I did. I just didn't know where to start. I thought it might make sense to organize a meeting for CARE men – just to explore some of these thoughts. The only problem: men don't really talk, do they? I had grown up in a culture (American) where the general rule was that men aren't really supposed to open up and share their "soft" feelings. There's no room for true emotions from men in the workplace, right?

Because of these sentiments, I decided not to have a structured meeting. Instead, I decided to just create a space where male CARE staff could come and just talk about being a man at CARE. I emailed the men that work at CARE-Atlanta inviting them to a lunch time brown bag of sorts where male CARE staff would come to just talk about being a man at CARE. I also put up flyers advertising the "MAN TALK".

At the first "meeting" we got about 10 guys. And as I expected, the first 15 minutes of the conversation meandered from sports to beer to work, until finally someone asked, "Why exactly are we here?" There was a silence so thick it was palpable. I answered, stating that I thought it might be worthwhile to discuss what it meant to be a man working at CARE. There was another silence, and then someone said, "Interesting... well, I guess I can start. I have a new boss, a woman. And I have to say this in all confidentiality; it is challenging working with her because she gets emotional." Immediately another guy chimed in, "What's wrong with her getting emotional? I get emotional at work sometimes." And thus our "MAN TALK" meeting began! And continued for the full hour without anyone leaving early!

Our male employees have asked that we continue providing space for MAN TALKS. We've met a few times, and plan to continue. They have been very enlightening, and are a time that the "fellas" can get together to share, listen, and advise on what it means to be a man working at CARE.

If your location hasn't thought about holding MAN TALKS perhaps you should consider it. I would be glad to discuss how we organized them, and what you can do to start them in your location. I can be reached at [fordham@care.org](mailto:fordham@care.org).

### Engaging Men—View from Jean Nimubona CARE Burundi

by Allison Burden and Jean Nimubona

Jean Nimubona works with CARE Burundi, helping programs mainstream gender transformative analysis by engaging men and boys for women and girls' empowerment

Why did he get involved in this? Jean explains that since he was young, he noticed an underlying cause of poverty to which the community was completely blind; he noticed the power that the patriarchal systems gives to men, which they then use abusively, with terrible consequences on women, children and men themselves.

The work that has been done over the years to address this imbalance of power has been badly targeted; and this has meant that there has been little progress in addressing gender based violence.

Past efforts did not really take a gender approach (with men and women and their relationships at the centre) but rather focused on women in development.

"I understood that men are the victims of poisoned privilege which the broader system imparts to them. And that, if we aspire to end poverty, we are then called to help men and women understand the issue in such a way as to not condemn either."

Jean adds, "What is most important in my work is to help men and women overcome the yoke that is imposed by norms and beliefs and to help men understand the advantages they will enjoy with equal relationships with women." And what is more, Jean sees positive results because people are becoming aware of the need for change in all contexts, even though the

work is very hard: it challenges jealously guarded institutions and their defenders who think that they will lose out if there is change.

Engaging men positively affects men and women, and there is evidence for this – here are some of the effects that women and men have identified as a result of the unequal power relations between men and women:

- High maternal and infant mortality in Africa
- A lack of consensus on the use of contraceptive methods (which are usually feminine) between men and women
- Women suffer physical violence at the hands of the male partners
- Women spend 3 or 4 times the time that their husbands do looking after the children, and spend more money on the education of their children
- Norms of masculinity results in men's vulnerability; they don't use health services or get medical advice when they are sick
- One third of deaths of young boys between 15 and 29 are due to interpersonal violence
- Globally, 80% of smokers are men, and they also have more sickness related to their professions

And for Jean, when we ask him what his perfect world would look like, he says, "My perfect world in terms of gender equality would be a world where men and women fully enjoy their rights and where there is social justice for men, women and children. This is the world of my daughter."

### Coming home from the Asia Gender Equity and Diversity Training of Trainers

by Anna Paradath

Listening is learning, I feel more confident, I had fun, I love the passion in the room, I learned by doing, I feel energised, my CARE family is getting bigger, I feel touched, I am reminded of what a wonderful organisation we work for – these were some of the comments at the closing circle ceremony of the regional Gender Equity and Diversity Training of Trainers held in Bangkok in May.

Our facilitators set the tone that we are all teachers and learners and from the outset I began learning from the experience and insights of others in the room.

An exercise on the Aikido framework of awareness, dialogue and action clarified its practical utility for facilitating a change process not just in gender but in every area of CARE's work. In discussing difference and power, we came to acknowledge our differences as well as similarities from Afghanistan to Vietnam to Papua New Guinea. We saw the difference between intent and impact, recognising the risks and consequences others face in trying to bring change.

Subsequent activities increased our awareness of who we are and how we identify ourselves and others, and of the meaning we give to those identities. This enabled us to recognise that like icebergs only the tip of our appearance and behavior is visible, while our feelings, beliefs, assumptions, knowledge, backgrounds, biases and hopes often remain submerged. Actually facilitating exercises around dialogue skills allowed us to raise these submerged issues above the surface and to explore them in seeking to understand the other as well as improve our facilitation skills. While dialogue about our innermost feelings and beliefs can be difficult, we were able to experience firsthand the difference that a safe and respectful atmosphere can make.

Despite the temptation to jump into action, the training allowed us to see the importance of looking at ourselves before looking at others, and to consider whether we would feel comfortable doing what we ask others to do. It also placed the onus on us, to apply our learning and move into action, with appropriate resources and tools of course.

What am I left with after five days in Bangkok? The knowledge that GED is SO much more than I had thought, a whisper in my ear to remember to honour others' wisdom, the notion of the facilitator as a guide and not an expert, the beginning of some very supportive friendships, the effectiveness of designing training in a way that will draw on participants' experience and bring awareness to life, and the memory of our Aikido experts, Walter and Jaime, becoming aware of themselves, meeting the other in dialogue, and dancing into action together.

## A Man in a Woman's Job? *By Allison Burden and Habibur Rahman*

Habibur Rahman is the Gender Equity and Diversity Advisor for CARE Bangladesh. He has worked in several national and international organizations as a gender advisor.

In answer to my question about what motivates him to work in the field of gender equity and diversity, he remembers his childhood and the maids at home. They cooked and prepared the table, but never joined the family at the table. Habib didn't understand. He asked his family. They explained that the maids were poor and that it went against tradition to have them at the table. He felt guilty about this. Not satisfied with his parents' response, Habib continued to ask. He soon learned that he should not raise these questions because he never got a satisfactory answer and soon the response was, "Stop asking these questions; we risk losing control of the maids if we even suggest such a thing." And, being the obedient son, Habib stopped asking the question out loud, but continued to wonder.

Later, Habib studied sociology and political science at university. He began to understand the inequality that he had seen in his family home. The questions that he had in his mind were at last 'good questions' to ask. As a research assistant, Habib had the opportunity to work in rural villages and interact with poor people. He learned systematic ways to explore social constructs and anthropology; his understanding grew.

By the time he left University, he knew he could not work for the public or the private sector – his passion was to work in development. In the context of Bangladesh, public service jobs are more secure and well respected than the development sector. This was a tough decision for him because his father put pressure on him to join government service. Habib refused. At last, he got a job. He worked in a rural area supervising 11 villages in a cash for work program. The project was aimed at increasing women's control over and access to resources. One of his responsibilities was to increase women's participation in the program to 50%. Habib worked hard to meet this target and soon exceeded it. When his supervisor heard that 100% of the participants that Habib supervised were women, he wanted to know more. The supervisor realized that Habib had excellent communication skills and was able to motivate and mobilize both women and men. As a result Habib soon received his first gender training. From that moment, he knew that gender equality was his passion and purpose and he took it up as a career.

I asked Habib how others react when he explains what he does. He says, "To begin with, my family didn't like my job. They didn't want me to work in development and even less in gender. They felt that the job was not prestigious enough. But I shared my work with my father; he was the first to come around." But still there were others to convince. Habib's wife and in-laws didn't understand what he did. Later his daughter was also critical about his job. But now she is training to be a lawyer and with her learning; she realizes how important her father's role is; with time the problems started to ease.

The journey has not been easy. As a man he faced challenges. The first was to make his place in a female dominated field. It is very difficult for a man to get a job as a Gender Advisor and the opportunity for professional development of Gender Advisor is very narrow. It goes against the tradition for a man to work for women rights. The second was to gain the trust of his female counterparts. He had no role models to follow in Bangladesh. He wondered how women viewed him and whether they trusted him. He decided that he should learn from them; he took real interest in their struggles and this inspired him in his own struggle. He learned how they overcame obstacles. He wondered how he could have credibility and raise work place issues such as maternity leave as a man, but then realized that he could; he did care about both maternity and paternity leave and the roles of men and women in child care. Slowly, he realized that women saw that he was working with them; they began to rely on him.

When asked about the secret to his success, Habib answers that his success mostly comes from his determination and hard work, which in itself is a product of his realization that it is not just the women who are at a loss due to gender discrimination. Men lose too and this motivates him to work for the cause.

And what does Habib has to say to other men:

"If you want to be a complete human being, change the social norms that perpetuate gender inequality. Without you playing your part, you will never be whole."

If you want to know more about how CARE is engaging men and boys, visit the Gender Wiki for:

- Information on how to join the Engaging Men and Boys Working Group
- Case studies on engaging men and boys from Burundi, the Balkans, and Bangladesh
- UNFPA/Promundo toolkit on engaging men and boys
- <http://gender.care2share.wikispaces.net/Engaging+Men+%26+Boys>