

WHY SHOULD MEN CHANGE?

Personal well-being: In many ways, men continue to benefit from political, economic and social systems that privilege them. On average, men earn more than women for doing the same work. Globally, women spend more time than men do on paid and unpaid work combined. The time women spend daily in caring for the home and children is, on average, still about three times what men spend. In most societies, men have greater access to and control over economic resources and assets than women on average. Men also have much greater access to political power; as of June 2017, women make up only 23.4 percent of national parliamentarians, 7.9 percent head of state, and 5.2 percent head of government. Yet the benefits of these patriarchal privileges also come with costs for many men and boys. Patriarchal masculinities can be bad for men's health, as well as women's. Around the world, on average men have higher death rates from accidents, homicides and suicides, as well as higher levels of drug and alcohol abuse. In some regions, men, and especially young men, are at higher risk than women of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. These health issues facing men have been linked with their adherence to patriarchal masculinities, and the pressure to be tough, strong and invulnerable. Where unemployment is high, the lack of a paid job can be a damaging pressure on men who have grown up with the expectation to be a breadwinner. This can in turn be expressed through their violent behavior towards other men and towards women. More generally, less rigidity in the norms of masculinity will allow men more options in how to live their lives and more freedom to fully express themselves emotionally, without having to put up a 'front' of invulnerability and suppress their emotions in order to stay 'in control'.

This is likely to bring benefits in terms of psychological well-being and inter-personal relationships. One of the striking findings from the Living Peace project, which targeted the husbands of women who had experienced conflict-related rape and intimate partner violence in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), was that almost all men reported improved conflict-management skills and new, nonviolent coping mechanisms to deal with trauma, with many reporting lasting improvements in their relationships with wives and children after the intervention.

For the benefit of women and girls: Many men feel that they will not be able to find long-term happiness and peace if women and girls always struggle and are treated unjustly. Men do not live alone or by themselves. They live in communities and societies, in relationships with others. They have mothers, wives, sisters, daughters, aunts, nieces, women colleagues and women friends; and the quality of their relationships will be damaged if the women in the relationships do not receive fair treatment and respect. Men can see that their lives are damaged, too, by a power-over system of gender inequality that damages the lives of women and girls whom they love and care about. One example: many fathers want their daughters to live lives free from fear, violence and inequality.

For the benefit of boys and other men: Witnessing men's violence as a boy is a strong predictor of later perpetration of violence. But such childhood experiences have also led many men to reject patriarchal masculinities, because they want to raise their sons differently than they were raised by their own fathers, with a vision of manhood that rejects violence and domination and embraces gender equality. The worldwide effort to promote men's greater involvement in caregiving work, for example through the MenCare campaign (<https://mencare.org/>), finds that men want to be involved for the sake of their sons as well as their daughters.

For the benefit of the political institutions: There may be several reasons why men's active support for women's rights and gender equality may benefit political parties and other organizations involved in political life. Supporting the right of women to participate fully in political parties and political processes helps to:

- ▶ Make parties/organizations more representative of and relevant to the whole community, women as well as men
- ▶ Strengthen parties/organizations, by drawing on the talents, skills and experiences of women as well as men
- ▶ Sustain parties/organizations, by bringing in women's energies and ideas for change, which thus far have been largely excluded

For human rights and gender equality: Men also get involved in the struggle for gender equality because it is the right thing to do. Women and girls have the same human rights as men and boys. Even when men cannot see personal benefits in gender equality, they still have a responsibility to promote greater equality. As long as systematic gender inequalities persist, those who benefit from them have an ethical responsibility to do what they can to change the system. Economic development and social prosperity will also be hampered if half of the population is forever oppressed. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development makes clear the links between gender equality and sustainable economic growth that leaves no one behind. Gender equality is also a crucial foundation of peace. Violence, both between individuals and groups, is strongly associated with patriarchal masculinities and gender inequalities in economic and political life. Men have an interest in challenging these norms and inequalities, and the violence that follows from them, for the sake of peace in their communities. The 2015 report on the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security demonstrated the links between gender equality and conflict resolution and peace-building. It is therefore in men's best interest to challenge patriarchal masculinities for the sake of peace and prosperity for themselves and their communities.