

PATRIARCHAL MASCULINITIES IN PRACTICE

- ▶ **Staying inside their Gender Box harms women:** Norms and expectations of masculinities and subordinate femininities disempower women and girls, promote violence against them and deny them their human rights.
- ▶ **Patriarchal masculinities confine men in their Gender Box and limit men's lives:** Many of the messages/pressures associated with the Man Box emphasize the superiority of masculinity over femininity and the authority of men over women. This Gender Box imposes narrow and restrictive gender roles on men that ignore and deny their emotional, physical and spiritual needs. It socializes men into violence, hierarchy and aggressive heterosexuality and uses them as 'foot soldiers' in maintaining the patriarchal system of domination.
- ▶ **In many societies, there is a lot of pressure on men to conform to the norms and expectations of patriarchal masculinities:** Men can be pressured to behave in certain ways that can go against who they actually are and what they actually feel or desire. Many men feel unable to express feelings of sadness or insecurity openly because such feelings are associated with being 'like a woman'; men are supposed to be tough and confident. In many places, it is okay for men to express their feelings of anger because such feelings are seen as masculine, but other forms of emotional expression are denied to them. These emotional restrictions deny men their full humanity.
- ▶ **Living inside our Gender Boxes is a daily practice:** Men act in certain 'masculine' ways that are considered to be appropriate for their gender, so that they can be considered as 'real men'. Few men want to be called effeminate or weak. Every day, men and boys make choices about how they will present and practice their masculinity. For example, a man may speak softly and gently when he speaks with his young daughter, but when he is with his son or male friends he is loud and aggressive. This tells us that masculinity is a daily practice – a living and dynamic process and not set in stone: it can be changed and transformed.
- ▶ **Violence keeps people in their Gender Boxes:** Violence is a widespread and everyday experience in the lives of women and girls in many societies; it is usually perpetrated by men and boys. Physical, sexual and emotional violence, and the threat of such violence, against women and girls keeps them in a subordinate position; such violence maintains the subordinated femininities of the Woman Box. Violence also keeps men in their Man Box. Men who are perceived as 'weak' or 'feminine' and particularly those who desire sex with other men face humiliation, bullying, and violence in many societies. Violence is also often a feature of induction into military and law enforcement organizations. One way to define gender-based violence is as the violence that maintains the Gender Boxes.
- ▶ **Gender Boxes are evolving but still restrictive:** There are many factors and forces that define and maintain the Gender Boxes: history and custom; prevailing gender norms, laws and policies that continue to discriminate against women and girls; divisions of labor in the home and work-place based on gender; differing levels of educational opportunities and access to resources; and the socialization of boys into violence. These factors and forces are changing, and many societies have witnessed dramatic changes in the lives of men and women in recent decades; from increases in girls' school enrollment to women's growing presence in the formal workforce. This means that the messages and pressures of the Gender Boxes are also evolving. The meaning and expectations of masculinity for many young men today may differ from that of their fathers and grandfathers. But the idea persists that there is a male Gender Box to which men must conform and a female Gender Box to which women must conform.

- ▶ **Stepping outside the Gender Boxes is difficult - men need skills and support to do so:** This training focuses on helping men to challenge masculinities in politics by stepping outside of their Gender Box. Some men are already doing this in different ways, from supporting girls' education, to integrating gender into elections processes and campaigning with women for gender-based violence legislation. There may be many reasons why men and boys choose to reject masculinities and step outside of their Gender Box. But doing so can often be difficult, not least because of the social pressure to conform to social expectations. This pressure may be felt in many situations, from interpersonal relationships to organizational 'cultures', for example in political parties.
- ▶ **Men who do step outside the Gender Box may be laughed at for not being “real men”:** Men who actively support the advancement of their female colleagues in elected bodies or civil society organizations may be criticized by their male colleagues for being “anti-man”. Even when they see that it is the right thing to do, it can be hard for men to step outside their Gender Box. This reaffirms the importance of not only building men's confidence and capacity to challenge patriarchal masculinities, but also supporting them to sustain their commitment and deal with the resistance they may face in doing so, not only from other men but also from some women in their lives.