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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
taukey	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 of 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

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<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.