

Gender Education and Training Network (GETNET)

BACKGROUND

GETNET is a training institution formed in 1995, servicing organisations and institutions in South Africa and the SADC region. It was amongst the first organisations to present workshops aimed at engaging men in gender issues. Many men working in the VAW field in South Africa have at some point had exposure to GETNET workshops. GETNET was the first training organisation in the voluntary sector to initiate men's gender training. Their men's training programme aims to enable men to play a positive role in organisational and institutional change. GETNET's perspective emphasises that transformation of the power relations between women and men flow from partnerships between women and men.

HISTORY OF THE GETNET MEN'S PROGRAMME

GETNET has been involved in working with issues of gender for almost two decades now (see detail of other GETNET activities below), but ran its first Men's Workshops in November 1996. The workshops aimed to transform men's consciousness about gender issues, targeting men working within civil society organisations and government. The men's activities are seen as complementary to GETNET's core work, and as strengthening it. GETNET hoped that their workshops would enable men to actively work towards the development needs of women and girl children, as well as incorporate into their work an understanding of gender rights as human rights. GETNET felt that gender equality might not be reached if men were not involved directly in the struggle. Their philosophy assumed that:

- Men are considered influential and powerful in determining the outcome of a struggle that involves the situation and rights of women;
- Men are either not involved in struggles for gender equality or they oppose these struggles;
- Men (or some men) can be persuaded to participate in the struggle for gender equality.⁹

Within this paradigm GETNET believed that men needed to be involved in the reprioritisation and reallocation of society's resources in order to meet the needs of women. Because resources are located within the major institutions of society, and men usually control these institutions, it is critical to begin to get men to engage with the distribution and allocation of resources to benefit all people.

TRAINING

GETNET's training workshops aim to assist men within organisations and institutions to:

- Rethink their roles in their organisations and in society;
- Recognise and value the roles and contributions of women and girls;
- Listen to women and girls and ask them what they think should be done;
- Discuss forming partnerships with women and girls and other men and boys to bring about the allocation and distribution of resources for gender equality, and for empowerment of women.

The Workshops of November 1996 led to nine provincial workshops run during 1997–1998. These workshops were targeted at NGOs, government and trade unions. Over 140 men were reached. In November 1997, a Training-of-Trainers Workshop enabled men to strengthen their skills and replicate the workshops within their organisations and spheres of influence.

EVALUATION

By early 1998, as part of its commitment to a process of evaluation and critique, GETNET began to refine the workshops, and identified limitations in the approach. These included:

- Assumption that an emphasis on gender conditioning of men would naturally lead them to an understanding of the conditions of women, or to support women's empowerment;

- Failure to contextualise experiences of men within the gender power relation paradigm. The workshops focused on the emotional experience of individuals and the discussions around emotional experience also served to enhance the belief that there was a singular way of conditioning and becoming a man;
- Facilitators were not equipped to discuss alternative ways of socialisation;
- A substantive analysis of the development and maintenance of patriarchy was lacking;
- There was a lack of understanding and exposition of the reproduction of gender hierarchies within organisations. There was no understanding of gender relations as power relations;

The current Men and Masculinities Programme training regime still utilises a 3 day format, and focuses on:

- Enabling participants to reflect on how their socialisation, culture, tradition and religion affect relations between women and men;
- Examining the intersections between gender, HIV/AIDS and Violence against Women;
- Promoting social relations that contribute towards equity between women and men; and
- Assisting individuals, organisations and institutions to formulate plans for change interventions.

It uses adult learning methodologies such as interactive and participatory group work.



- Failure to include a focus on developing partnerships between women and men.

Facilitators began to modify the original workshop design taking into consideration these critiques. Research around the construction of masculinities was also conducted. In 1999, the objectives of the workshops changed to include developing a more holistic men's programme that included:

- Developing a network of gender trainers;
- Extending and deepening the knowledge and resources available regarding men and organisational change;
- Collecting relevant materials, conducting research, presenting seminars and workshops; and
- Producing materials and resources.

Key areas of content covered in the first two days include self-reflection; interrogation of culture, tradition and religion; deconstruction of power relations; a close look at HIV/AIDS and Gender Based Violence (GBV). The third day involves planning for change and grounding it in the real world through discussing what it means to be 'a new man', obstacles to change and personal planning. The programme is informed by GETNET's desire to encourage men to examine their individual male identities and their belief that men can change from a stereotypical view of maleness to a conception of a 'New Man'. This new conception would be based on the real challenges and pressures facing men.

The programme is overseen by a Men's Reference Group, which includes two psychologists.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

The recent 2003 'Building Effective Partnerships Between Men and Women for the Achievement of Gender Equality' Conference was a product of the years of development of the Men and Masculinities Programme (see section later in report on Changing Attitudes and Values for more detail on this conference). The conference was inspired by the positive results of the programme in raising awareness and enabling men to define their constructive role in reducing the incidence of HIV/AIDS infections and understanding their role in decreasing gender-based violence (GETNET Annual Report, 2003).

CHALLENGES

GETNET has found it difficult to measure success. This is a problem internationally, as shown by the research findings in the report. The difficulty is measuring whether a paradigm shift has occurred for an individual.

Another issue GETNET has faced with the programme is whether to seek formal assessment through the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). GETNET opted not to seek NQF accreditation as the methodologies of evaluation and quality control are still being debated within GETNET.¹⁰

FUNDING FOR THE MEN'S PROGRAMME

When GETNET originally started the Men's Programme, there was sufficient funded work to allow for the development of the programme. GETNET notes that its Men's Programmes are not necessarily more costly than the other programmes.¹¹ However, the organisation is trying to increase its self-sustainability by marketing its services, and the Men's Programme is hard to use as an income generator. GETNET found that since organisations and institutions were less willing to send people to participate in a men's programme, the programme had to be subsidised. This underscores the financial implications inherent in running even a broad-based, well-researched programme such as GETNET's. Clients would rather put their staff through a generic programme than a dedicated Men's Programme. However, some government departments have indicated that they would send their staff to both. GETNET believes that it may be difficult to get funders to support a rollout of such a programme. To date, funders have not targeted or

requested such programmes for support. Government funding or contracts for Men's Programme services have not been easy to find, as most departments have not identified masculinity and other male interventions as an issue.¹²

OVERALL TRAINING STRATEGY

The Men and Masculinities Programme is located within GETNET's overall training strategy. This strategy sees men's training programmes as one element in a co-ordinated approach to gender training. By 2003 all GETNET training programmes were organised under a strategy that addresses the following four major challenges in institutions and organisations:

- Involving both women and men in gender transformation in organisations and institutions;
- Adopting strategies that integrate gender equality and women's empowerment in organisational planning and change processes. This includes addressing the costs and benefits of changes to both women and men and contains a vital awareness-raising component and covers the impact of the socio-cultural factors such HIV/AIDS/ gender-based violence (GBV) /poverty that shape gender inequalities in society;
- Developing needs-based and context-specific solutions. The training promotes gender equality mainstreaming strategies as central to effecting and sustaining equal gender relations in policy, planning, procedures, practices and culture in organisations and institutions. The strategies avoid marginalising gender as a separate 'women's issue' and lays a basis for partnerships between women and men;
- Addressing constraints faced by individuals charged with responsibility for designing and/or implementing gender policy. GETNET training facilitates the design of gender-sensitive policy and planning instruments. It enables management and staff in gender posts to initiate and lead processes for empowering women and achieving equity. It is specifically aimed at assisting staff in gender posts to effect gender equality mainstreaming.

Knowledge, skills and capacity to accomplish gender equality and women's empowerment cannot be taken for granted. GETNET's experience testifies to the vast need for ongoing training and development of trainers themselves in order to maintain high quality and effective services (GETNET website: Approach: August 2004).

The three current main programmes focus on:

- South African Local Government;
- Encouraging men's active participation in the search for gender equality;
- Empowering change agents within organisations and institutions to initiate, lead and maintain organisational change processes.

GETNET's key programmes are Gender and Local Government, Men and Masculinities and National and SADC Gender Training Workshops. For the purposes of this case study, this section will only focus on the masculinities programme.

THE MEN AND MASCULINITIES PROGRAMME

The programme is a unique approach to encourage the participation of men in working towards transforming gender relations in South Africa. The 3 day training workshop GETNET offers to men is unique in that it is held exclusively with men in a secure and non-threatening environment where they can reflect and discuss a range of gender issues relevant to their personal lives, work and community. The training offered within this programme is targeted at men who are interested in gender work and are employed as transformation officers, diversity trainers, human resource managers, members of men's groups or forums.

The Men's Programme often overlaps with other programmes. For example, GETNET has recently commenced some regional work, which involves training 20 trainers in Angola who will then train 500 men involved in de-mining activities. Although the South African content resonates well with the Angolans, the experience of decades of war may present itself as a challenge because they are not used to discussing emotions and actions in this context.

AN INTEGRATED FRAMEWORK

As part of efforts to continuously improve its programmes and increase their relevance, GETNET has developed frameworks and materials that respond to the Southern African context. This has led to the development of a research framework called the Triangle Framework, which integrates the gender aspects of HIV/AIDS, gender-based violence (GBV) and poverty in the GETNET suite of programmes. The framework was developed at a GETNET SADC gender training workshop held in Johannesburg in October 2001. It looks at how gender interfaces individually with HIV/AIDS, gender-based violence and poverty, and takes into account the links between GBV and HIV/AIDS, between GBV and poverty and between poverty and HIV/AIDS. Although there are organisations, networks and alliances that work with aspects of the model, the issues are seldom integrated. GETNET has now engaged in action research that has successfully identified and established the intersectionality of these issues (GETNET Annual Report, 2003).

MATERIALS

To date, GETNET has trained over 400 men through its Men and Masculinities programme, and has developed its own training manual, *Masculinities in the Making of Gendered Identities*. This publication is the first South African training manual aimed at interventions with men in the gender power paradigm. As a guidebook for trainers, it is relevant to all gender practitioners. It provides models, case studies and possible exercises for organisations that intervene with men. It addresses cultural, religious and ethnic identities in the creation of masculinities. It aims to influence conceptions of South African masculinity, and utilises the terms, language and cultural contexts that are relevant to South African identities, e.g. asking if there is an African masculinity? Facilitators using the workbook can plan a process that will assist participants to understand the making of their masculinities, and gives direction for the transformation of masculinities. This workbook has influenced GETNET's own three-day Men's Workshop. In addition GETNET has produced a large amount of materials in the form of reports from training programmes and seminars.

In 2002, GETNET integrated these issues in training programmes and materials. This was piloted in the Eastern Cape with the Department of Welfare and used in the Men and Masculinities training programme. In 2003, national and SADC gender training workshops and three Men and Masculinity training workshops were used to continue this action research. This information is now to be written up as a module and fully integrated in all programmes over 2004. The module will be further tested and submitted for accreditation in 2005. This will allow GETNET to play a significant role in the promotion and testing of local interventions for this multi-faceted theme.

GETNET MEN AND MASCULINITIES CONFERENCE, 2003

A key element in GETNET's strategy to integrate men into a network that can actively challenge gender oppression is to conduct research and discussions around the theme of masculinity in South Africa. The recent 2003 'Building Effective Partnerships Between Men and Women for the Achievement of Gender Equality' Conference was a product of the years of development of the Men and Masculinities Programme. The conference was inspired by the positive results of the programme in raising awareness and enabling men to define their constructive role in reducing the incidence of HIV/AIDS infections and understanding their role in decreasing gender-based violence (GETNET Annual Report, 2003).

The conference objectives were:

- To create a platform for discussion and debate on issues relating to masculinity and gender equality by key role-players in the field;
- To bring men and women together as stakeholders, in order to encourage partnerships for the achievement of gender equality;
- To consolidate learning and experiences and to develop further strategies that will guide work with men towards gender equality; and
- To use the opportunity provided by the heightened awareness and media coverage during the 16 Days of Activism and HIV/Aids day to focus on the gender aspects of these issues, especially the role of men.

The conference participants produced recommendations on strategies that can be adopted to build partnerships between men and women. Information from the conference will be used to consolidate the men and masculinity training programme and materials.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TRAINING

- Developing empathy and listening skills among men is an essential starting point for men's training and needs to precede work on gender and human rights;
- Empathy and listening skills for men parallels assertiveness training for women;
- Men should be encouraged to find their individual identities separate from the pack and to take responsibility for their own behaviour;
- The aim of men's training should not be simply to sensitise people but to effect change.



OUTCOMES

- The concept of a national conference on the issue of masculinity is a useful starting point for open discussion around this issue. The targeting of society's 'culture of silence' around GBV by society is an attempt to bring GBV 'out into the open'. Silence is seen as a key factor in any ongoing tolerance of gender inequality and violence.
- The conference named patriarchy as the common enemy and identified strategies for combating patriarchy in the mindsets and behaviours of men.

Some of these are:

- Identifying and highlighting positive role models, especially in the media;
- Rejecting patriarchal culture as an acceptable excuse;
- Using appropriate language in communicating gender messages;

- Removing the gap between theory and practice;
- Recognising poverty as part of the cycle of violence;
- Replacing the culture of silence with one of dialogue; and
- Achieving a paradigm shift in terms of male identity.

GETNET received a clear mandate from this conference to continue work in the field and to:

- Produce materials for masculinities training in the area of sexuality and sexual preference as well as GBV;
- Arrange forums for GETNET partners to discuss issues pertaining to the training of men for gender equality;
- Compile (and update continuously) a directory of gender/men's activist organisations to facilitate links between them.



VIMARY

GETNET's publication of a manual for practitioners enables activists in the field to utilise case studies and histories with a South African focus. The manual is an important and valuable contribution to the work towards a gender equal society.

While GETNET's work with men does not directly address VAW as a core focus, (i.e. it does not run perpetrator programmes) its work in the creation of new masculinities is directly relevant to changing the way men interact with violence.

GETNET's work primarily involves training. The impact of this approach can be seen in the number of influential practitioners working with men who have been trained by GETNET.