

# Transforming Masculinities and Preventing Sexual Harassment, Exploitation and Abuse by Aid Workers: A Qualitative Review

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## Abstract

Sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse (SHEA) by civilian humanitarian aid workers is a severely understudied phenomenon with devastating effects on local communities and individuals. Humanitarian actors have attempted to address the problem with the implementation of zero-tolerance policies and improved reporting mechanisms. This qualitative study investigates the outcomes of using pedagogies based in experiential and personal narratives on men's thinking about patriarchy as a tool of primary prevention within Plan International, an aid and development organisation. Findings suggest that the experience of sharing stories makes staff aware of the ways in which patriarchal beliefs contradict their values. This dissonance leads men to change their behaviours at work and at home, as well as to challenge their colleagues' attitudes on homophobia and sexism. This pedagogical approach reduces the localisation burden of the workshop; however, local knowledge remains critical. The findings suggest ways forward in the broader sector's approach to localisation.

**Keywords:** masculinities; sexual exploitation and abuse; participatory pedagogies; localisation

## Introduction

Sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse (SHEA) by international aid and development actors is pervasive and significantly underreported (Office of Internal Oversight Services, 2015: 21–2). Studies into SHEA are complicated by the broadness of the term and the actors involved. Research into the phenomenon is generally focused on military peacekeepers, partly because they form the largest proportion of actors sent to responses (Allais, 2011; Bian *et al.*, 2024; Luedke *et al.*, 2017), but also because the UN publishes data on allegations of peacekeeper SHEA, while aid organisations generally do not. In contrast, aid and development organisations, although present and implicated in SHEA, are severely understudied, despite being overrepresented on a per capita basis of SHEA allegations (Conduct in UN Field Missions, 2022;

Westendorf, 2024). SHEA is not only deeply harmful to the legitimacy of international actors, such as aid organisations and the UN, but is also a heinous human rights violation for those directly impacted. Further study within international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) is vital to understanding and mitigating the prevalence of SHEA, as aid workers are a fundamentally different demographic to military peacekeepers. Sector responses to SHEA have focused on compliance-based policies and reporting mechanisms as opposed to gender-transformative primary prevention methods more typical in national-level violence prevention.

This paper is part of a broader study into the effectiveness of gender-transformative methods of preventing SHEA (PSHEA) within Plan International, an aid and development organisation with a focus on children's and girls' rights. The design of the *Masculinities for PSHEA*



sessions was led by the lead author of this paper, who is employed by the organisation. This paper seeks to answer two questions: ‘how can the use of participatory and experiential learning change men’s relationship to patriarchy?’ And ‘how can global tools for men’s engagement be localised across regions?’

## SEA in the Aid Sector and Prevention Methods

SEA in the aid and development sector first became public knowledge in 1993 after the number of sex workers in Cambodia rose from 6,000 to 25,000, a rise attributed to the presence of the UN Transitional Authority. In response to this increase, the head of mission said ‘boys will be boys’ (*The Independent*, 1994) and issued guidance to staff not to visit brothels while in uniform or with UN vehicles (*Simic*, 2012: 41). In 1995, humanitarian peacekeepers colluded with organised crime in human trafficking to Bosnia to profit from the demand for sex workers from peacekeepers (*Simic*, 2012: 42).

SEA is more pernicious than merely purchasing sexual services from locals. Westendorf and Searle found the term extremely expansive, suggesting varieties of behaviours driven by different motivations/permissive factors ranging from transactional-sex, which might involve some level of agency and negotiation albeit with extremely unequal power, all the way through to planned, sadistic abuse that could include gang rapes, murder and torture (*Westendorf and Searle*, 2017: 369). Others critique SHEA as a category of inquiry because conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) is driven by the same root causes: structural gender inequality, poverty and displacement, begging the question as to why the UN makes a differentiation at all (*Luedke et al.*, 2017).

What is generally called ‘prevention’ by the sector are instead reactive and compliance-based solutions (*Anania et al.*, 2020; *Westendorf and Searle*, 2017), focusing on practical difficulties such as knowledge and access to adequate reporting mechanisms (*Ferris*, 2007). These take the form of posters for display or use of social media to reach potential survivors (*Grady*, 2016: 6). Unfortunately, they are usually assessed as untrustworthy by local populations (*Mazurana and Donnelly*, 2017: 31). Rarely have prevention methods sought directly to implicate broader societal social norms such as patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity, usually because doing so requires expensive long-form training that is not feasible during crisis, meaning these trainings are better placed in resilience or peacebuilding phases.

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), the UN’s highest humanitarian coordination body, has led the sector’s response to SHEA by urging peer

organisations to develop codes of conduct with zero tolerance for SHEA. This approach has been criticised for driving the issue underground (*Grady*, 2016; *Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response*, 2024) because of very little perceived legitimacy for how vague and broad definitions of SHEA are (*Westendorf*, 2023). Information-based awareness programmes prior to humanitarian deployments are common, taking the form of videos and PowerPoint presentations via online video-calling services. These trainings use a knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) model to monitor and evaluate workshops that are criticised for individualising the issue as a ‘few bad apples’ instead of framing it as a cultural and institutional failure (*Allais*, 2011:10). Allais points out that learning that is driven by KAP models can neglect collective responses and frequently fail to localise materials to the realities of those receiving the training (*Allais*, 2011:11).

Because materials are used globally with minimal contextualisation, sector calls for localisation raises questions about the usefulness of centrally designed global tools for PSHEA. Localisation is a broad term that may refer to how funding is distributed, with localised work being characterised as leadership by local actors who directly receive funding (*IASC*, 2023). However, localisation also refers to a process of contextualisation, a necessary step to tailoring the programmes and tools to be locally relevant (*Our Watch*, 2021: 75). In this sense localisation refers to the growing calls for decolonisation of the sector as it seeks to ensure local knowledge is centred in the process of capacity strengthening.

There are signs that this approach is changing to gender-transformative primary prevention methods within INGOs. CARE International has developed PSHEA materials involving men and their masculinities (*CARE International*, 2021). Many organisations work on masculinities within gender-based violence programming (*International Rescue Committee*, 2024; *Plan International Inc.*, 2021), but long-form primary prevention has rarely been used with staff, perhaps reflecting a generally colonial attitude that sees patriarchy and other harmful supremacist social systems as external to humanitarian organisations. Indeed, even at the national level, interventions on men and masculinities for gender equality generally target men with the least social privilege, such as asylum seekers or young men, rather than those empowered by social systems, such as humanitarian workers or managers/leaders (*Durriesmith*, 2020: 430; *Salter*, 2015: 12).

These new approaches in engaging humanitarian staff in PSHEA are informed by national level actors working against male violence, such as the ‘One Man Can’ programme, implemented by Sonke Gender Justice in

South Africa, that seeks to transform men's gender and sexuality-related beliefs and practices to become advocates for gender equality (van den Berg *et al.*, 2013). Reviews of similar programmes have found that longer courses are more effective (Flood, 2018: 200–3), meeting participants 'where they are', and building to more difficult conversations (Funk, 2018). Importantly, primary prevention interventions such as this one, focused on how men live out the gender norms they have internalised, should be part of a broader holistic plan for sexual violence prevention (Flood, 2018) that also includes work on broader material and systemic expression of gender inequality within the organisation (Salter, 2015: 5).

The *Masculinities for PSHEA* sessions, a five-week, twenty-hour series of workshops, are designed to sequentially guide men through a process of understanding, questioning and re-evaluating their own masculinity. In this study, the twenty hours of workshops were delivered over the course of three days due to time constraints. Design was led internally by the first author of this article in collaboration with other Latin American staff, and contains contributions from Beyond Equality, a UK-based gender equality and masculinities NGO. The methodology uses a participatory and experiential pedagogy (USAID, 2023:18) that begins with the experience and knowledge of the participants, similar to Equipundo's Manhood 2.0 Programme (2018). A fuller description of the methodology and its sessions is available in the Annexes to this paper.

## Qualitative Research Methodology

The *Masculinities for PSHEA* sessions were held across three regional training of trainers (ToT) events in Bolivia for South American staff, Rwanda for Eastern and Southern African staff and Nigeria for West and Central African staff, reaching a total of seventy-seven staff. These sessions trained new facilitators of the workshops who then ran the trainings in their own offices. Participants were selected by their Country Office leadership teams, with a request for one junior staff member and one from management. The ToT event lasted for five days: the first three days were spent experiencing the training as participants and the final two days spent on methodological localisation of the workshop. Participants rewrote, adapted and changed the methodology to be more culturally relevant. One-to-one interviews were conducted with selected participants one month later to discuss their experiences at the workshop and their concerns about adapting the methodology to their local context. Focus groups were conducted six months later.

The basic methodological principles of grounded theory (Corbin and Strauss, 2008 [1990]; Glaser and Strauss,

1967) were followed, although it was Charmaz's (2014) version of it that was largely followed. In total, eleven semi-structured interviews and three focus group discussions were conducted through a staggered process. Guiding questions are provided in Annex 2. Interviews and focus groups were held online using Microsoft Teams and its auto-transcribe feature. These first auto-transcriptions were subsequently revised until they reached their final form. All participants were previously informed of the purpose of the research and gave prior informed consent. To preserve the anonymity of the participants, fictitious names are used and only the country of workshop is shared (Table 1).

From these transcriptions, initial coding was carried out using ATLAS.ti 24 software, in which concepts and 'incidents' (Charmaz, 2014:128) were coded. This was open coding, in which new concepts or codes emerged. From this initial coding, we moved on to another phase of focused coding where, through the study and comparison of the initial codes, we divided some or merged several into one, which emerged as categories of analysis, in a continuous process of 'back and forth'. The 639 initial codes were grouped into twelve code groups (categories or variables). In this process, three possible 'core variables' or 'core categories' emerged (Table 2). A theoretical sampling was performed, seeking pertinent new data

**Table 1: Interview subjects**

Anonymised name	Age	Country of workshop	Individual interview	Focus group
Daniel	42	Rwanda	Yes	1
Solomon	39	Rwanda	Yes	1
Kelvin	53	Rwanda	Yes	1
Paul	34	Rwanda	No	1
Alex	45	Rwanda	No	1
Steven	42	Rwanda	No	1
Arnaud	40	Rwanda	No	1
Antonio	32	Rwanda	No	1
Boris	29	Nigeria	Yes	2
Junior	45	Nigeria	Yes	2
Obasi	35	Nigeria	Yes	2
Varney	32	Nigeria	Yes	2
Idris	38	Nigeria	Yes	2
Mijhail	50	Nigeria	No	2
Ilich	34	Nigeria	No	2
Raul	38	Nigeria	No	2
Bernardo	35	Nigeria	No	2
Phillip	50	Nigeria	No	2
Timothy	37	Nigeria	No	2
Alejandro	42	Bolivia	Yes	3
Santiago	53	Bolivia	Yes	3
Sebastian	30	Bolivia	Yes	3
Guillermo	46	Bolivia	No	3
Gonzalo	32	Bolivia	No	3
Claudio	42	Bolivia	No	3
Louis	35	Bolivia	No	3
Hugo	40	Bolivia	No	3
Dante	28	Bolivia	No	3

**Table 2: Core categories and emerging themes**

Core category	Emerging themes
Dissonance between the status quo and personal values drives behaviour change	<p>Pedagogies that are experiential and personal are effective ways to learn new feminist concepts</p> <p>Space to talk between men reveals discomfort with the status quo</p> <p>Discussions about discomfort with the status quo leads men to question their relationship to patriarchy and privilege</p> <p>Discomfort with the status quo reveals unearned privileges</p> <p>Several men noted how it substantially changed their worldview</p>
Men change their behaviour in the workplace and at home	<p>Men can change their beliefs on LGBTQIA+ communities</p> <p>Men may call out other men for homophobia or sexism</p> <p>Men can create communities/teams to reach other colleagues</p> <p>Men's views on housework can shift</p>
Using participatory pedagogies lowers the burden of localisation	<p>By focusing on personal stories, the activities localise themselves</p> <p>Localisation still requires local examples and references</p> <p>Religious knowledge is highly important to facilitating in the West African context</p>

(conducting additional interviews) to develop our emerging explanation; therefore, interviews were conducted throughout the research, until we considered that a reasonable degree of saturation in the properties of our categories was reached. Memos (notes, drafts and a network of linked concepts) were written throughout the research process and were shared in periodic meetings held by the research team.

### Limitations

**Selection bias.** The participants are all male-identified staff of the organisation, chosen by management to be facilitators in their own countries to replicate the sessions. As a result, participants are highly educated, with significant buy-in to the gender-transformative mission of the organisation.

**Researcher and facilitator bias.** The first author of this article was the lead facilitator of the sessions that participants experienced as well as the lead researcher conducting the interviews; he is also an employee of the organisation. As such, participants may have been predisposed to assessing the sessions favourably during interviews. Focus groups were held to allow participants to also function in a group environment.

### Results

The three core categories derived from our analysis, as well as twelve emerging themes linked to them are shown in Table 2. The first two categories respond to the first research question, 'how can the use of participatory and experiential learning change men's relationship to patriarchy?' The first core category stands out: participants found the training beneficial because it problematises the status quo (patriarchy) and its associated privileges as incompatible with their own values. This happened because the experiential, personal and embodied pedagogy engaged men beyond the abstract and into the personal. The result of this is that participants claimed their behaviours at work and home changed, with

participants challenging the discriminatory beliefs and attitudes of their peers and others stating an intent to change the distribution of housework at home – the second core category. For its part, a third core category relates to the second research question 'how can global tools for men's engagement be localised across regions?' suggesting the emphasis on participatory pedagogies reduces the need to adjust activities to ensure local relevance. The following sections explore each of the twelve concepts that formed the core categories.

### First Core Category: Dissonance between the Status Quo and Personal Values Drives Behaviour Change

Pedagogies that are experiential and personal are effective ways to learn new feminist concepts. Participants had praise for the participatory approach used to teach new concepts such as consent. Sexual consent is explored via an activity that seeks to dynamically have men set and test boundaries with each other. Participants reflect on how they felt when trying to communicate boundaries and what feelings arose when boundaries were crossed.

The activity requires that men pair with a colleague and follow the instructions of the facilitator in the centre of the room. Men communicate with each other what they are comfortable doing or not. Instructions range from 'shake hands' to 'touch your partner's hair', which increasingly test their boundaries. Instead of speaking, participants generally set boundaries through facial expressions or other physical actions that were frequently misinterpreted. During reflection there are various responses; for instance, when asked why some participants found it difficult to say no, one participant in Bolivia commented that their partner seemed excited and eager, and they felt bad saying no. In Nigeria another participant stated that they didn't realise they could say no.

Regarding this activity and others like it, participants noted that the methodology focused on experiencing feelings instead of abstract concepts.

I think some of the methodologies and some topics like consent, I had not done those before. You know when you cross a boundary, how do you know that you have crossed somebody's boundary? And those are like everyday life experiences. And sometimes you may tend to ignore or not appreciate why maybe somebody may feel like they are not comfortable. I think those were beneficial things for me to learn and it is easy then to even to teach our colleagues, you know, where we run those topics like on the Safeguarding Code of Conduct. You know, the whole issue of maybe inappropriate discussion, touch or getting closer. Sometimes I think we don't have the practical ways of teaching that. It was an exercise where your mind is that this is a training environment, but as you do it, you know, there are certainly instances where it really becomes real, you know, and you feel like 'No, maybe I cannot do this. I cannot do that.' (Daniel, 42, Rwanda)

Another participant noted how the workshop was qualitatively different from other trainings because of how it engaged him personally. This extra dimension of understanding appears crucial to having men understand on an empathetic level their relationship to privilege.

In previous trainings, it was more like I was looking at it afar, like I wasn't personally relating to them, but this training helped me to personally relate with those privileges I have. For prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, I have a feel of what it means, but I've not felt so personally engaged like I did during the training, it went beyond being from a programme level to a personal level. (Idris, 38, Nigeria)

Participants frequently noted that they do not have spaces to talk about gender, patriarchy and masculinities with others, especially not with other men. Given space to talk between men revealed discomfort with the status quo. They noted that realising their own experiences in learning about their gender/masculinities were not necessarily unique but like their peers in the same region, made the space valuable.

In general terms, it was also a very valuable space, because many of us as cis-heterosexual men, may never have had a space like this. I think that it was also very nice to be able to share with people who had somewhat similar upbringing. When you see as Latino men, there are some things that since childhood they always tell you that you see as repeated in other countries. (Sebastian, 30, Bolivia)

Discussions about discomfort with the status quo leads men to question their relationship to patriarchy and privilege. The result of speaking about the status quo forces introspection or 'checking oneself' to understand

how different expectations relate to their privilege in their community.

Yeah, it feels like I need to check myself very well – as a man, vis-à-vis the expectations that are there within this society, the power I possess as a man, the privilege I have as a man in the community where I live or come from. There's a different dimension for me personally after the training, because it helps me to reflect more closely, to look at things as a man vis-à-vis the privilege that exists. (Idris, 38, Nigeria)

This introspection from participants reveals how patriarchy is a system that conditions men to accept and reproduce the status quo. Realising that this conditioning has been ongoing, men are led to ask themselves what it would mean to no longer engage with patriarchy.

This patriarchal system also conditions you in your way of being a man. It not only conditions you that you have to act in a certain way, but to speak in a certain way, to think in a certain way. But if I do not want to be part of that, what do I do? It was a space for reflection, but also a space for openness. To think what am I going to do now? I believe that was the main thing. (Sebastian, 30, Bolivia)

Realising this conditioning comes with an understanding of one's position in one's community. Participants use phrases such as 'opening my eyes' or 'right before us' to highlight how obvious yet obscured the patriarchy was to them.

It has opened my eyes to a lot of things that were happening around me and yet I did not take notice of them, and it was enlightening because it's as if I did some of those things that I feel were normal because of where I sit as a person. As a male, I see them as normal, not knowing that if the coins were to be flipped, then I would have realised that it wasn't normal. And going through that process with you opened our eyes to some of those things that are actually right before us, without even realising that they are more or less like social constructs. Prior to that time, I did not know them, but *my thoughts and how I view things have greatly changed to the extent that I think some colleagues within the office now call me 'female champion'*. (Varney, 32, Nigeria, *emphasis my own*)

The italicised text is an example of men's 'change-talk' as a "social representation" that is "primarily discursive" rather than a factual account of "what really happened" (Seymour *et al.*, 2021: 885). Through change-talk, men discursively create representations of how they have changed from participating in feminist interventions. Thinking critically on these self-assessments suggests follow-up research should engage the women in these offices to assess their perceptions of change, if any.

The questioning of the status quo inevitably moves on to the issue of unearned privileges and what to do

about them. The dissonance revealed by this line of questioning drives men into taking actions they believe will rectify this unfairness, which in some cases consist of taking on more household chores.

But after the workshop, I did a bit of reflection with reference to when I started. Also, to take a keen interest in doing those duties which are considered feminine; for example, cooking we could just add. Now, I'm not confident, I could just ... OK, today, I'm not the one who's supposed to cook even though we're not working yet at the same place. I'm beginning to share what I'm thinking. I am willing to share those responsibilities, *but not by force, but willingly becoming an ally, you know, to break those barriers [that] work around patriarchy and those privileges*. I think there are too many privileges that we, as men, have, but I think we need to be self-conscious about those privileges because women do more. Personally, that is how it has affected me, and I think it's going to impact even as I interact with other men in different cycles. (Kelvin, 53, Rwanda, *emphasis my own*)

Reflecting on the italicised text as change-talk, it is important to note the agency that the participant emphasises in his 'change', asserting his control of the process, to some extent reaffirming his agency/masculinity in the process. This aligns with criticism of how some anti male violence campaigns attempt to compensate for losses of masculinity by appealing to other criteria of hegemonic masculinity (Salter, 2015: 9).

## Second Core Category: Men Change Their Behaviour in the Workplace and at Home

The changes expressed by the participants translate into behavioural changes in the workplace. Participants noted they now had a preoccupation with using intersectionality to consider the inclusion of people with disabilities and other minorities in their programmes.

In that case, I remember last week while I was in Nairobi, doing other work on safeguarding, and the question jumped to my mind when we were doing something about diversity. I asked the whole group, 'have anyone of you noticed if the workshop venue has disability access or not?' And no one was able to do that, and I was like 'Wow, that's what I brought from the previous workshop.' (Solomon, 39, Rwanda)

One participant shared a moment where, after the workshops, he challenged a peer for holding a sexist belief and recommended they and other men sign up to the workshops.

So, for example, there was this meeting we had with colleagues during the sixteen days of activism. And someone raised a concern that male colleagues of this organisation have – they feel more priorities are being given to female colleagues, right? So, the question was not thrown at me, but with my experience and with the knowledge I had during the training and other forums that I have been part of as being from HR [human resources], *I quickly stepped in and I corrected this instance. I said, 'OK, this is so naughty*. There are ladies within the office that are, you know, fighting for a cause and you guys are saying "no, there are no more parts for us now". Please go to this masculinity workshop that we've gone to that changed us and do it'. (Varney, 32, Nigeria, *emphasis my own*)

There is a clear paternalistic tone in the words 'correcting' and 'naughty', more acceptable in disciplining children than disagreement between equals. A hierarchy of status is implied: men who have participated 'have changed for the better', and those who have not or hold more patriarchal views are lower status (Myrttinen, 2018:10).

Another participant noted how the visibility or knowledge that there are men willing to call out colleagues is itself a factor in addressing sexism.

There are instances where somebody, like the other day, one of my colleagues finished eating and then left his plate there and was expecting the female colleague to pick it up. And then immediately somebody will shout and say, 'Hey, you! Don't do that before Obasi comes in and talks about masculinity in here.' (Obasi, 35, Nigeria)

Calling out other men for not picking up after themselves is a minor and expected outcome; however, in the context of West Africa, calling out and challenging other men for homophobia is a more difficult. One participant described fear around hosting the discussions on SOGIESC (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sexual Characteristics) in their own country, hyperbolically suggesting disagreements could result in physical violence, stressing how contentious challenging beliefs on SOGIESC is.

I think there needs to be some contextualisation rather on the topic of the SOGIESC and gender identity and expression – that one is it. I'm still finding the way around it to be able to make sure that, you know, I don't worry somebody doesn't pull a knife in the hall [laughter]. (Boris, 29, Nigeria)

Despite this contextual reality, one participant noted that his beliefs about homosexual men had changed and he had challenged a co-worker, intending to make him understand why SOGIESC inclusion is important for programme delivery. While not a radical transformation from rejection to celebration of queer identities, it still

represents a progression to a more tolerant position on homosexual men.

I said to them that even though they're homosexual, what we're saying here is that we shouldn't dominate or marginalise or see people that are homosexual as if they are less than or are not masculine enough. So, we're not saying that you should go against your moral upbringing or whatever it is that you're holding on to – culture or tradition or religion – but what we are saying is that if somebody chooses to be different from us, then it doesn't make the person less than. I think for me I was comfortable talking about it because of the training ... Because I think without the training I, myself, would have thought in the same way he thought. (Obasi, 35, Nigeria)

This action of calling out other men is supported by collaboration with other participants who attended the workshops. When having witnessed resistance to feminism in a discussion, men came together to discuss how to approach their colleague.

Yeah, we spoke with Varney. In fact, he also called me. We spoke together and we said that yes, it would be good that we also go gradually and slowly with this guy on the issue. We said it would take time, but then in the little spaces that we have, we can be promoting some of these positive learnings. (Obasi, 35, Nigeria)

Another participant from the same country who viewed the encounter noted relief from having other men now trained in the topic of gender.

It does help a lot because, for example, normally this kind of conversation on masculinity, most of the time it's me that used to discuss on things like that, but it was interesting because Obasi was the one that gave us the overview at the meeting, so it was good. It's positive altogether because for those who have questions, they can easily relate with anyone around. So, this helps us a lot because you have more than one person. (Idris, 38, Nigeria)

### Third Core Category: Using Participatory Pedagogies Lowers the Burden of Localisation

A key component to the *Masculinities for PSHEA* programme is the phase of localisation that occurs on the final two days of training, in which newly trained facilitators adapt and change the methodology. A core component of the literature is that training materials should be locally relevant and contextual to maximise impact (Our Watch, 2019: 73). This aligns with Allais' criticism that pre-deployment training in the sector is often not relevant to local realities (Allais, 2011:11. Since the workshop was designed by Latin American men, it was important to

know how African men would change the sessions to make them contextually relevant.

Participants said that focusing on personal stories had the effect of minimising the burden of localisation.

For me, I don't think it needs to be changed much. I think [the workshop is] applicable because even when you look at ... Yeah, I remember when you were looking at the diagram of the men and we were going labelling the men, et cetera, to say who do you consider has manly behaviour? What do you consider manly? You can get different levels in which this one would be a manly figure from a different context. What we said still will be the point of conversation, whether it's been done in Latin America or in Zimbabwe. For example, someone who's strong, someone who says 'soldier' or someone who, you know, those examples we are giving, like 'Mandela', et cetera, so you would find how you tried some similarities. I did not find anything that I would say it was, way, way out there, some common activities, yeah. (Kelvin, 53, Rwanda)

However, localisation still requires use of local examples and references.

OK, so I think for [the localisation] it's going to be more of the examples, not the activities, because the activities, they are driving at a point or key learning idea. (Obasi, 35, Nigeria)

It's not so much the content itself, and or even the exercise itself, as much as making sure that the examples that are used, and that the conversation that is being had, are relevant to the local space. (Solomon, 39, Rwanda)

In contrast to the previously discussed West African experiences, when discussing SOGIESC, a Colombian participant, upon reviewing the contents for localisation with a trans colleague, expressed a desire for the workshop to go further and improve by decentring cis-heterosexual men.

We did this second review with my colleague. We noted that in Bolivia, most of us were cis-hetero men. So, when we saw the reading that our colleague did as a trans man, it was like, OK, of course, yes, it was noticeable in that by and for cis-hetero men. It is from your experience. It was like ugh, of course I was missing this part here! Because I do feel that we talked about the trans and gay experience, but it was not enough. (Sebastian, 30, Bolivia)

West African men suggested that religious knowledge is an important skill for facilitators but should come second to gender equality. Participants from West Africa throughout the workshops referred to how the concepts and the ideas presented related to their religious beliefs. As the facilitator, I noted my own lack of religious knowledge left me unable to fully participate in or guide discussions.

When asked if religious knowledge is important for a facilitator, participants highlighted the importance that local knowledge has in being able to distinguish between religious and cultural norms, and what is a cultural norm that is being justified on religious grounds. A participant noted how this knowledge is important because often these religious justifications can be weak and easy to debunk.

That conversation is important because generally your religion influences everything around here, and sometimes there's that thing lying between religion and culture that sometimes you can't really differentiate. And then, just like for example in our response to child marriage, you discover that there are instances where the religious interpretation from different people might be that. OK. It's OK to marry off a child who is a child to another child. So, but then there are others who are like 'No, actually, religion does not teach like this' – it's more of a cultural thing than religion itself.

So understanding the little thin lines between them may aid the facilitation, but more importantly, being aware of how to ensure that conversation flows. Because most times people don't like talking about issues like this and therefore we leave them unattended to. But when conversations are held in an open way, it's possible to have an understanding that will be beneficial. (Idris, 38, Nigeria)

In other cases, participants thought religious teachings can be useful because religions themselves often also have prosocial beliefs tied to them that are influential within some contexts.

So, religion itself does not promote discrimination, like Christianity does not promote discrimination. It commands the opposite. Whoever calls themselves a Christian must love the one who they perceive not to be Christian, someone who is different. So even from a religious point of view, there are all those backings. Yeah. If you're just going to put the politics aside and look at the normal way of life, life out in the community, life in religious circles, you won't find anything that is saying that you need to discriminate against such people. You won't, instead they're commanded to love them. (Daniel, 42, Rwanda)

However, religious knowledge and use of religious arguments should be in the service of pushing forward a feminist view of gender equality. A different participant notes that while useful for reaching men where they are, it can undermine the gender transformative ambitions of the work altogether.

I feel that, yes, a facilitator that is religious ... I think that person really must absorb and understand masculinity first. And know the differences and where his religion and his biases come into play, before the person could train others in that regard. Otherwise, the person will be doing more harm than good, and going and saying other things that

might not really go in line with what masculinities is all about. So, for me, I think the facilitator ... his or her religious background is valuable as well. But then it depends on the person, whether they know how to kind of sort out these differences. Let me not let my religious or my cultural background interfere with the key messages of what I'm trying to pass out here. (Obasi, 35, Nigeria)

## Discussion

Regarding the first research question 'how can the use of participatory and experiential learning change men's relationship to patriarchy?', despite the strong selection bias of men that are already involved in gender equality, this approach to discussing patriarchy, masculinity and SHEA is effective in driving a deeper level of engagement and understanding to the issue. In comparison to SHEA trainings run by the IASC, which are mostly information-transmission based (Allais, 2011:10; IASC, 2021: 8), the participatory approach of engaging men on the level of their own histories, personal stories and experiencing discomfort is effective because it reveals hidden cognitive dissonances. Our results indicate that thinking shifted because of having space with other men to discuss patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity. Once patriarchy is 'revealed', the dissonance between the behaviours they are rewarded for and their own personal values becomes obvious and drives men to consider what it would mean to embody a masculinity that does not seek patriarchal approval.

This dissonance prompted changes in how household chores are discussed, inducing commitments to a shift towards a more egalitarian model of task distribution in the home, facilitated by engagement in this regard with other colleagues in the workplace. Focusing critically on men's change-talk, however, highlights the way men discursively represent their change in ways that can reinforce dominant masculinities (Seymour *et al.*, 2021: 901). By emphasising personal development, there is lack of focus on gendered power relations (Seymour *et al.*, 2021: 900) despite self-proclamations to be 'female champions'. Likewise, participants stressed their own agency in the change process, offsetting any perceived loss of masculinity or status by appealing to their control and agency, highlighting the rigidity of social norms and how hegemonic masculinity finds ways to adapt. These findings highlight the difficulty in seeking gender-transformative outcomes via individuals/groups vs societal shifts. Participants must frame their changes in ways that will be respected by peers to not lose status. Stressing one's own agency may not only quiet a participant's own feelings about their masculinity: it also presents to

potential critics a version of change that is less likely to be ridiculed and easier to defend.

Men calling out other men for expressing patriarchal opinions or engaging in sexist behaviour may have a preventive cultural effect: for example, men who did not pick up after eating (expecting a female colleague to do so) were urged/reprimanded by their male colleagues to clean up. This is a key factor in SHEA prevention as it breaks the silence and perception of approval of misconduct from other men (Flood, 2018:130). This development, however, risks generating a ‘battle of masculinity against masculinities’ (Macleod, 2007:10) whereby men who have participated are constructing new hybrid masculinities after gaining the knowledge and vocabulary of feminism and using it as social capital to enhance their own positions of power (Myrntinen *et al.*, 2016), given that men validate other men’s masculinities (Kimmel, 1996). This development has costs and benefits; progress towards social pressure driving more gender egalitarian behaviours and intra-male accountability is beneficial, but it uses patriarchal tools of status and hierarchy, feasibly ‘empowering ... empowered men’ (Duriesmith, 2020:428) and generating a regressive kind of ‘self-congratulatory spectacle of masculinity’ (Salter, 2015:14) unless accompanied by a comprehensive whole of organisation process that also addresses structural inequality (Flood, 2018). These tendencies aside, it is crucial that this demographic of ‘empowered men’ be targeted by interventions to avoid the obvious trap of laying the responsibility for PSHEA on the least empowered men (Duriesmith, 2020:430; Salter, 2015:12). In order to ascertain if these interventions are stabilising patriarchy rather than fundamentally challenging it (Myrntinen, 2018), follow up research focusing on the perceptions and experiences of women who have been exposed to the changes these participants have described will be crucial to find where improvements can follow.

Allais criticised sector responses for using a KAP approach in its monitoring and evaluation (M&E) (Allais, 2011), claiming that KAP’s inherent individualism frames SHEA as a problem of individual behaviour, rather than as a phenomenon induced by norms systems present in organisations. Our methodological guide also contains a KAP rubric that was requested by local staff themselves. However, this inclusion has not hindered collective responses. Being a group learning exercise, men formed bonds with each other, empathising/relating to each other’s experiences of learning masculinity. Our results show that men who learned together went on to plan how to reach their fellow colleagues, both in the moment and regrouping to reflect and strategise on how to reach more resistant colleagues. This finding does not invalidate Allais’ critique, it remains true that using a

KAP model for M&E cannot capture collectivist changes. Additional research is recommended on more collectivist M&E tools for future versions.

Our results on the second question of inquiry, ‘how can global tools for men’s engagement be localised across regions?’, reveal that the localisation burden of the workshop can be minimised by focusing on participatory pedagogies; the content is in effect localised as it originates from within the participants themselves. Thus, the results indicate that to adapt the workshop to a given local setting, localisation should focus on local examples more than on methodological change if it is already participatory. Participants from East and West Africa highlighted that knowledge of the local religious context is important to ensure religious arguments can contribute to gender equality, while also stressing that internalising gender equality must come first. Participants indicated that the use of religious arguments could hold back a facilitator from being gender-transformative but nevertheless is an area they should be knowledgeable of because of the importance it holds in different communities. This knowledge enables discernment between cultural/religious norms, allowing facilitators to reveal when cultural norms are justified by appealing to religious beliefs or vice versa. On the other hand, the contributions of Latin American staff contrasted with those of West African staff regarding SOGIESC inclusion. Where African staff were very reluctant to discuss SOGIESC in their contexts, Latin American staff were critical the workshop did not go far enough, highlighting the limitations of centrally designed materials for global use. Further localisation in Latin America would likely take the form of more activities and discussion of queer masculinities which would be perceived as more challenging in West Africa.

## Conclusion

Through long-form participatory primary prevention programmes directly targeting men, humanitarian organisations can create collectives of men who will question and challenge their peers over their conduct in the office. These collectives can challenge patriarchal norms and beliefs that assume other men will approve of misconduct and will not act against it, although the literature suggests that these practices also run the risk of stabilising patriarchy and therefore underlines the importance of building in accountability to women. Our findings indicate that it is possible to reach this outcome by using participatory trainings that go to the personal and experiential rather than the abstract and purely theoretical. Facilitators should be locals with in-depth local knowledge and use local examples and references, prepared to challenge

cultural or religious justifications for patriarchy when resistance to training materials is expressed. Further research into these forms of primary prevention interventions with men should engage with the women and other genders within these workplaces, exploring what changes, if any, are perceived in their co-workers as well as in the workplace culture, so that cultural change can be assessed.

## Annex 1: Workshop Description and Broader PSHEA Strategy

The *Masculinities for Preventing Sexual Harassment, Exploitation and Abuse (PSHEA)* sessions cover a five-week, twenty-hour series of workshops designed to sequentially guide men through a process of understanding, questioning and re-evaluating their own masculinity. Men participate in weekly sessions in groups of ten to twenty individuals, with ‘homework tasks’ included in the methodology, generally consisting of away-from-facilitator conversations between participants during the week between sessions. Some offices have opted to take longer than five weeks, instead shortening the sessions to ninety minutes a week, meaning that participants instead cover the entirety of the material over a process of three to four months. Sessions are generally facilitated face-to-face; however, in some cases of local emergencies, they have instead been facilitated online using tools such as MURAL.<sup>1</sup>

Design was led internally by the lead author in collaboration with other Latin American staff and contains contributions from Beyond Equality, a UK-based gender equality and masculinities non-governmental organisation (NGO). The methodology uses a participatory and experiential pedagogy (USAID, 2023:18) that begins with the experience and knowledge of the participants themselves using activities and dialogue-based activities with guided facilitation to uncover how gender is experienced by male staff.

Participatory methodologies are grounded in the following principles:

- Learning begins with the experience and knowledge of the participants, as opposed to an established theory or set of knowledge.
- The educational approach is learner-centered and aims to reinforce learners’ self-esteem and self-confidence and to develop a positive, realistic self-concept.
- After the participants have shared and critically analyzed their own experiences, they look for general commonalities and patterns.

- New information from different sources (including outside experts, specialized texts, and documentaries or other films) is then introduced to deepen analysis and stimulate the collective creation of new ideas and reinterpretation of existing knowledge.
- Participants then apply what they have learned. In ongoing processes of change that need continuous monitoring and evaluation, they practice new skills and develop strategies and action plans to transform those aspects of their reality that they have identified as unjust and as obstacles to their basic rights.

(USAID, 2023:18)

The workshops seek where possible to reach for emotional experiences as well as to impart abstract knowledge-based theory.

The sessions are non-mandatory. This decision was based in knowledge that resistant men are even more resistant when they have been forced to attend a training. Instead, to generate interest in the sessions the Safeguarding Unit responsible for PSHEA within Plan International has opted for a process of internal campaigning and movement-building. Each office that has had individuals participate in the training of trainers (ToT) event (of which there is always two, one junior and one leadership level) lead the campaign to have their office use the workshops for their PSHEA strategy, the logic being that resistant men who do choose to participate have at the very least chosen to be there, meaning a facilitator can avoid accusations of imposition, a minor but important element in dealing with resistant men who find themselves in the sessions.

The sessions are part of a holistic whole-of-organisation approach to prevention of sexual harassment exploitation and abuse. The Masculinities for PSHEA sessions are the primary prevention element of the overall strategy, designed to be implemented during the resilience and peacebuilding stages of the humanitarian cycle – given that during emergency the time cost of these workshops is simply prohibitive. Other elements of the organisation’s approach to PSHEA involve zero-tolerance policies, reporting mechanisms, focal point training for safeguarding specialists and human resources staff, and a broader gender equality plan for the organisation.

## Session Descriptions

### Session One

The first session is focused on reaching common understandings of basic gender and masculinities studies terminology. Patriarchy, gender binary, intersectionality, hegemonic masculinity and sexual orientation, gender

identity and expression, and sexual characteristics (SOGIESC) are all explored through dialogue-based activities.

Participants describe and define what hegemonic masculinity is in their context through an activity that sees participants draw outlines of themselves on butcher's paper. Participants are asked to write in the head of the outline write the names of 'manly men' (fictional and real), within the torso they write a 'manly job' for someone to have, and along the hands and feet they write they response to 'manly ways to deal with a problem'. Responses are guided to reflect what they believe their society values. Through this activity participants thus define hegemonic masculinity in their context. The facilitator is then able to pull out the themes in the activity using Equimundo's Man Box (Heilman *et al.*, 2018; Equimundo, 2018) to guide conversation.

Participants discuss Audre Lorde's metaphor of 'The Master's House' (Lorde, 1979) in relation to their own position as men within patriarchy. Through an interactive activity participants 'build the master's house' through 'pillars' they choose. Options for these pillars are social forces such as education, popular culture or traditional leaders. They build these pillars with the 'lessons each social force teaches us about what it means to be a man'. Each lesson is written on a piece of paper that represents a 'brick' within that pillar; where appropriate the lessons/ 'bricks' are marked as one of the 'master's tools'. Through this activity they identify how different sectors of society hold different expectations of men. Men dialogue critically about these expectations and how they are perceived if they do not meet one of these expectations. Ultimately the activity presents the idea that while men certainly profit from patriarchy, the privileges afforded to men come at significant cost (van den Berg *et al.*, 2013).

### Session Two

The next session dives deeper into the previous concepts by seeking to understand where/when in one's life did participants learn lessons about what it means to be a man. Participants share personal stories of how they learned masculinity from caregivers (male and female), popular culture and aspirational figures. This component was inspired by The Men's Story Project and its use of narrative sharing for gender equality (Peretz and Lehrer, 2019). Through this storytelling approach, men are given space to reflect on their personal life stories and, importantly, identify what experiences were common, ubiquitous or rare about their upbringing.

Participants then move to discuss bell hooks' concept of 'dissimulation'/masking as a behaviour all men engage in to access the benefits of social norms even when it is inauthentic or driven by external pressures (hooks, 2004:138). Participants draw masks on the front, they

draw 'their hegemonic masculinity' and give it a name. People choose names like 'the seducer', 'the warrior', 'the hustler' and describe what about this mask gives them power when they created this mask. Participants on the back of the mask write all the things that they are hiding through its use; they often share 'not knowing the right thing to say', 'fear of rejection', 'fear of losing control'. Participants then reflect with each other over guided questions meant to problematise their relationship with their 'hegemonic masculinity mask' such as 'do we ever feel our mask is holding us back?' and 'have we ever wanted a different outcome but lacked the ability to drop our mask?' Participants often share how these masks are created in moments of fear and trauma to take back control, but that in many cases they find 'themselves controlled by their mask' and not the other way around. These descriptions of 'losing control' are problematic, as it is often a way for men to use framings that avoid accountability for their actions (Seymour *et al.*, 2021: 896). Nevertheless, it is a step forward that men are at this stage in the sequence beginning to problematise their relationship to patriarchy and identify the ways it holds them back in their lives. The session ultimately is oriented towards acknowledging how hegemonic masculinity lives within us, how we negotiate our masculinity in reference to it, and identifying all the ways in which it does not serve us or ultimately holds us back.

### Session Three

After session two has having thoroughly set up patriarchy as not ultimately beneficial for men, that many of their values and goals for life contradict with the behaviours patriarchy rewards men for, session three seeks to open space for imagination and reconstruction. Participants begin by using a 'Problem Tree'<sup>2</sup> to discuss key themes related to their work at Plan International: child early and forced marriage, female genital mutilation, sexual exploitation and abuse, among others, through the framing of patriarchy and masculinity. They identify how hegemonic masculinity and patriarchy contribute extensively to these programmatic areas that their offices and teams work on, allowing men to take a step back from the personal into the abstract.

Men then discuss what a masculinity free from patriarchal conditioning would look like. Men are asked to write on sticky notes answers to how 'their new masculinity' would think, feel and do about a certain issue using a 'heads, hearts, hands'<sup>3</sup> methodology. Participants are asked questions like 'what does their new masculinity think, feel, do, when a young staff member says no to you', and similar questions ranging from mundane experiences of potential subordination, through to moments of loss or conflict with others. Men write their answers and post them up on a board. Once all the responses are up,

the facilitator then imposes a gender binary on to their answers and groups all the responses into ‘feminine coded’ and ‘masculine coded’ and told that the patriarchy will judge them on these behaviours, but that they have ‘broken the gender binary for themselves’ when asked to think free of patriarchal conditioning.

Reflecting on these ‘new masculinities’ via the gender binary has participants generally respond that the version of masculinity they want to embody is made of both ‘feminine and masculine coded’ elements and as a result agree perhaps this new way of being shouldn’t be gendered, that the gender binary is a limiting framework to think on who they want to be. The key message for the facilitator to reach is that disinvestment from the need to be seen as masculine is on some level needed to ensure self-confidence and avoid male fragility, that one’s masculinity be more intrinsic than extrinsically built.

#### Session Four

This session leaves behind the personal and moves to the purpose of the sessions, what are men to do regarding the safety and wellbeing of colleagues and programme participants, usually women and girls, from our colleagues who would perpetrate SHEA? This session seeks to build accountability to women, girls and feminism by linking men’s desire to live happier and healthier lives, free of patriarchal expectations, to speak up and out against their colleagues who would abuse their privilege.

The session opens with a discussion and activity on the drivers for male violence (Kaufman, 1999; Our Watch, 2021) and has men discuss how they can collectively mitigate the drivers of this violence in accordance with recommendations by Our Watch and Kaufman. This allows men to engage first with the topic on an abstract level.

Men are provided with a hypothetical case study of a new young male staff member joining a programme unit of the organisation and experiencing/witnessing many of the key drivers of male sexual violence. The case study shows that when the young man attempts to raise his concerns to the programme unit manager about a colleague, he is silenced and ultimately ostracised from the other staff members. In groups men discuss these pressures and likely scenarios and brainstorm around ways they as a collective can mitigate these actions.

It has the added benefit of externalising the issue of sexual misconduct at this stage. Men can discuss accountability in reference to working together to hold ‘other men’ to account. The fifth session the following week builds off the agreements men make at this stage to turn the lens inward, meaning we are sequencing the demands on men from less challenging/more acceptable on to larger more difficult demands.

The second activity requires that men pair with a colleague and follow the instructions of the facilitator in the centre of the room to explore the concept of sexual consent. Men communicate with each other what they are comfortable doing or not. Instructions range from ‘shake hands’ to ‘touch your partner’s hair’, which increasingly test their boundaries. Instead of speaking, participants generally set boundaries through facial expressions or other physical actions that were frequently misinterpreted. A guided discussion follows where participant reflect on their feelings and sensations felt by learning about consent through testing each other’s boundaries.

The session on a whole is guided towards a framing against potential narratives of saviourism to women and girls but instead frame PSHEA against women and girls as part of the same struggle for their own liberation from patriarchal conditioning and wellbeing. Men’s accountability to women and girls is presented as holding their peers to account. This is framed as an action that is collectivist in nature, both beneficial for the person potentially on the receiving end of sexual exploitation and abuse, but also beneficial to them, that the world in which they can live free of patriarchal pressures, violence and expectations is the same world in which violence against women and girls no longer exists.

#### Session Five

This session, with contributions from Beyond Equality then builds on this willingness to see and respond to patriarchal behaviour in their peers to reflect on how participants have also made use of the patriarchy for themselves. Men are guided through a conversation that asks them to identify how they have used their privilege for personal gain and thus their own culpability with the system. The first activity on ‘recognising how you have been a perpetrator of the patriarchy’ identifies the way privilege works and then holds a guided reflection on how they have made use of it in their life. Men are frequently very quiet and reflective during this conversation, understandably unwilling to share stories of their perpetration. Sometimes, however, participants do share reflections that they are able to identify when they have silenced girlfriends or colleagues and not realised they were doing so because they felt their power/status being threatened. The mood is generally sombre and quiet.

Activity two asks participants ‘with whom do we need to show solidarity?’ to present an intersectional analysis of privilege and oppression beyond gender but also to race, ability or immigration status. It uses a methodology where men are presented with several situations and asked questions like ‘which people or groups may be worried or afraid when using public restrooms’, ‘which people or groups will not be seen positively if they are assertive and confident’ or ‘when you studied the culture or history of

your ancestors in school, who may have been excluded?' This activity allows the facilitator to frame solidarity/allyship beyond the gender binary, and instead as an activity related to privilege and power more generally, that our actions need to consider other minority groups such as refugees or religious minorities as well.

The session ends on an activity that allows men to think of solidarity with others along a matrix of an X-axis between 'use of one's privilege' and 'rejection of one's privilege' and a Y-axis of 'restorative actions' or 'preventative actions' to discuss concrete actions men can take into the workplace. They are then given a large list of actions such as 'reflecting on times you have belittled or ridiculed feminism', 'calling out men who have interrupted a woman during a meeting', 'reflecting on when you have allowed oppressors to present themselves as victims' and 'seeking to repair a past action with someone you have wronged'. The participants work together and add other actions to this matrix. The purpose of the activity is to give men examples of the kinds of actions they can take moving forward with regards to their own patriarchal power and privilege.

All the workshops seek to 'meet men where they are' (Funk, 2018) and build to bigger more contentious and difficult conversations (Flood, 2018: 160). By beginning small with their own experiences and general concepts, men are given space early to discuss resistances to feminist ideas and concepts, while also problematising their own experiences with patriarchy. It gives space for men to have some time to identify the ways in which they have been victimised by the patriarchy and other men to see the benefits of a world without it. Through this moment men are guided towards the key message that a collective vision of wellbeing linking their own interests with the wellbeing of others is the way forward. It stresses that the feminist mission to end the patriarchal order (calling back to the Master's House of session one) is the only way to undo patriarchy's hold over themselves and their community. It frames SHEA by their peers as not just harmful to the victim but also to everyone in the humanitarian response. In a very real way, when a colleague harms another via their own patriarchal power, they have also harmed you.

### After Session Learning Continuation and Accountability to Women

Participants are tasked with organising a session between the men who have participated in the session with the rest of the office, making space especially for their office's feminist/women's network to share and openly discuss their learnings to begin collaboration on further actions.

Men are further tasked with creating the next steps to ensure that the primary prevention interventions into

masculinities does not end after this first step. This is work that occurs between the collectives of men created and separate from the remunerated work of the local Safeguarding and PSHEA specialist who is required by the organisation to oversee the implementation of our safeguarding and PSHEA policy, reporting mechanisms, investigations and broader contributions to our internal gender equality programmes.

Arising from this stage, different offices have opted for different ways to ensure the continuation of learnings of masculinities and broader feminism within their offices. One national team that participated undertook a whole-of-office rollout of the Masculinities for PSHEA sessions by opting for online sessions using MURAL during a period of severe social unrest, effectively using the programme during a national emergency. Another office created a parallel men's safe space to their office's women's safe space with periods of overlap and collaboration to work on their office's internal gender equality. Other offices have expressed desire to begin lunchtime talks similar to work by Oxfam America in opening spaces to discuss patriarchy and masculinity within their office<sup>4</sup>.

## Annex 2: Guiding Questions to Interviews and Focus Groups

**One to one interview** (done after the series of five sessions)

- What was your experience with the workshops, what did you think of them overall?
- What were your feelings about the way the training-of-trainer process went?
- The *Masculinities for Preventing Sexual Harassment, Exploitation and Abuse (PSHEA)* project aim to change the beliefs of male staff from patriarchal beliefs to less violent ones, in your opinion what are the challenges of this mission in your offices?
- The workshops are designed by Latino men, mainly between Europe (London and Madrid) and Central America (Honduras). Do you think that is apparent in the methodology?
  - How does it manifest?
- Do you think that the methodology has to be adapted or localised for your environment?
  - How?
- How did it feel to bring these discussions on masculinity to the office?
  - How did male colleagues respond?
  - How did female colleagues respond?

- Plan International aims to be a children's rights organisation, with a strong focus on girls' rights. Do you think Plan is a safe work home for women and girls?
- Do you think that in general the men who are hired by Plan identify as feminists or pro-feminists?
  - If so, do you think that the men hired by Plan live in accordance with the principles of feminism?
- Have you ever seen or heard of any abuse perpetrated by a man within the organisation?
  - What happened?
- Did you intervene?

**Focus group** (done during the follow-up process, six months after the series of five sessions)

- What are your feelings and thoughts about the workshops now that you all have had time to take them to your Country Office and facilitate some sessions?
- How have you felt as facilitators?
- After the workshops we did, how have you followed up on these learnings as a team or office?
  - Did you run sessions with the rest of your offices on the outcomes of the sessions?
- How did you localise the methodology for your environment? What did you have to change or modify?
- How did it feel to bring these discussions on masculinity to the office?
  - How did male colleagues respond?
  - How did female colleagues respond?
- Have you had any moments in which you've had to intervene in any sexism?
  - How?
  - What happened?
- Plan International aims to be a children's rights organisation, with a strong focus on girls' rights. Do you think Plan is a safe work home for women and girls?
- Do you think that in general the men who are hired by Plan identify as feminists or pro-feminists?
  - How? If so, do you think that the men hired by Plan live in accordance with the principles of feminism?

## Notes

- 1 MURAL is an online collaboration tool similar to Jam Board: <https://mural.co/> (accessed 14 January 2026).

- 2 For an example of a Problem Tree activity, see [https://werise-toolkit.org/en/system/tdf/pdf/tools/Problem-Tree-Analysis\\_0.pdf?file=1&force=](https://werise-toolkit.org/en/system/tdf/pdf/tools/Problem-Tree-Analysis_0.pdf?file=1&force=) (accessed 14 January 2026).
- 3 For an example of a Heads, Hearts, Hands activity, see <https://letstalkscience.ca/educational-resources/teaching-stem/head-heart-hands> (accessed 14 January 2026).
- 4 Oxfam America's masculinities space is discussed in the following podcast by *Now and Men*: <https://open.spotify.com/episode/6V2sds73On1fG35AC3imUH?si=c256364c5c364234> (accessed 14 January 2026).

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