

Gender training must get its rightful place in development

The growing recognition of the importance of involving men in the struggle for gender equality highlights the success of GETNET's work with men, which is surveyed in this article.

BY TONY SARDIEN, TRAINING MANAGER

For GETNET, training for men is closely linked to discussions about "development".

The discussion about what makes up "gender work" takes place at a time when the globalisation of production, trade, markets and financing has contributed to the economic marginalisation of African economies. In institutional and organisational settings, the neo-liberal philosophies and practices of governance and management are the dominant ways of thinking and working.

These frameworks use and draw upon forms of dominant masculinity that emphasises "rational decision-making" based on technocratic criteria and methodology. Often, there is an aggressive approach with regard to the reorganisation of resources, services and production capacities that takes little or no consideration of the human, social impact of that reorganisation.

GETNET presented the first Men's Workshop in November 1996, in Durban. The organisers thought that



Men's training, Cape Town 1997

the goal of gender equality might not be reached if men were not involved in the struggle for gender equality. This view assumes 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; and
- men (or some men) can be persuaded to participate in the struggle for gender equality.

The work with men assumes that

transforming men's consciousness about gender issues is a critical precondition for them to support gender equality in practice.

Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women necessarily involve a fundamental and comprehensive re-prioritisation and re-allocation of society's resources so that the needs and interests of women and girl children are met. These resources are located within the major social organisations and institutions. Men continue to control access to these resources as well as their allocation and distribution.

Education and training work with men is necessary, firstly, to raise their gender awareness and, secondly, so that they can understand the critical importance of meeting the developmental needs of women and girl children. This gender education and training work is therefore inviting men, as decision-makers in families, in government departments, sporting bodies, the banks and farms – in fact, in all organisations – to:

- Re-think their roles in their organisations and in society.
- Recognise and value the roles and contributions of the women and girls living right next to them.
- Listen to women and girls and ask them what they think should be done.

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- Discuss forming partnerships with women and girls and other men and boys to bring about the allocation and distribution of resources for gender equality, the empowerment of women and peace.

Men's Gender Work: 1996 - 2000

The purpose of the national workshop of November 1996, convened in collaboration with the Community Law Centre in Durban, was to “encourage the full participation of men on gender issues; and develop a pool of male gender activists to work for equality within organisations and institutions”.

‘Education and training work with men is necessary to raise their gender awareness and so that they can understand the critical importance of meeting the developmental needs of women and girl children’

The organisers assumed that it was possible to bring about changes in beliefs and attitudes within a participatory workshop. We recruited facilitators, trade union organisers and government officials involved in the delivery of programmes and services to participate in the workshop.

In the course of 1997-1998, nine provincial workshops were held and involved programme or project workers and members of the “line management” in trade unions, NGOs and government departments. A few individuals located in the corporate sector also attended.

All the workshops took place in one of the major towns or cities. Men located in rural areas did take part in the workshops but they were generally in the minority. Of approximately 140 individuals who participated, about five were white. All the workshops were presented in English, although participants

were asked to use their mother tongue if they preferred and facilitators encouraged references to expressions, sayings and terms related to gender issues and relations when it was appropriate to do so.

Since 1999, our focus has broadened to include looking at the roles of men in organisational change. This has meant including additional topics and materials and modifying the initial workshop designs.

In November 1997, we presented a Training of Trainers workshop training programme for male gender trainers. Men who had taken part in the first five provincial gender workshops in 1997 were asked to apply to attend this programme. Eventually, 19 of the 20 men who were selected completed the programme. Participants received additional exposure to gender issues and this was combined with an introduction to design and facilitation principles and practice.

As GETNET's gender awareness raising workshops became more widely known, a number of NGOs, trade unions and government departments began to request that the male members of their organisations also participate. In response we have presented gender workshops for men, covering the financial services sector, trade unions, agriculture, security services and education.

By early 1998, a critique of our men's workshop had begun to develop. Some of our staff and panellists thought the programme was flawed and limited in several respects. Firstly, it was felt that the workshop's emphasis on sensitising men to the possible impact “gender conditioning” might have had on themselves did not necessarily make them more sensitive to the conditions of women or more supportive of women's empowerment. Secondly, it was felt that the workshop's focus on the emotional experience of individuals was of limited use and at times inappropriate because

those experiences were not consistently contextualised as gender power relations in a variety of situations.

The discussion of the emotional development and experience of men assumed that the “ways of becoming men” were more or less uniform and that “men” were more or less all the same once they “arrived”. When gay issues did emerge in the workshops, facilitators tended to focus on the right to choose a sexual orientation and did not deal with the issues of the experience of being gay.

Thirdly, while reference was made to the patriarchy in the workshop readings and sometimes descriptively in the course of the discussion, there was no analysis of the material generated in terms of the development and maintenance of the patriarchy in the contexts from which the participants originate.

Fourthly, there was concern that there was no particular focus on the role of men in reproducing gender hierarchies in organisations and institutions and in workplaces in particular. These limitations meant that there was no consistent analysis of the extent to which gender relations are power relations. The differences in power (positions and influence) between women and men were not dealt with consistently. Neither was the differences in power between men dealt with, particularly the production and reproduction of dominant and subordinate masculinities. Lastly, the workshop did not include a focus on developing partnerships between women and men to transform gender relations and achieve the goal of gender equality.

This critique began to influence our work with men in two ways. Firstly, some of the facilitators modified the original workshop design, for example by introducing gender analysis of organisations and projects and posing the roles of men in relation to organisational

or institutional change. Secondly, programme planning now included a focus on researching the literature on the construction of masculinity/masculinities and the role(s) of men in organisations and organisational change.

In 1999, the objectives of our men's programme was re-formulated to include:

- developing a network of gender trainers;
- extending and deepening the knowledge and resources available regarding men and organisational change
- collecting relevant materials,

men to organisational change. This assisted participants to start clarifying their own focuses within the area of men and organisational change and it helped GETNET to begin to articulate its "own agenda" in this area more fully.

Two "Men and Organisational Change" seminars were presented in 2000, the first in May in Pretoria and the second in August in Cape Town.

Professor Thandabantu Nhlapo, of the SA Law Commission and deputy chairperson of the board of GETNET, presented a paper entitled "The impact of the uses of culture

and Organisational Change – Critical issues in the South African Landscape".

At the Cape Town seminar, Dr Farid Esack of the Commission on Gender Equality agreed to present the findings of a South African survey of gender work with men.

Summary of Results

The output of GETNET's interventions in the area of working with men are as follows:

- Men's Gender Awareness Raising Workshops in all provinces, between 1997 and 1998. The workshops were funded from the organisation's own resources.
- A number of other gender awareness raising workshops have been conducted on request, reaching about 400 men.
- Thirty men have been trained to present the Men's Gender Awareness Raising Workshop.
- Eight men continue to be active in the field as gender educators and relate directly to GETNET.
- Reports were written documenting the content and processes of the national and provincial workshops and the Training of Trainers programmes.

The growing recognition of the importance of involving men in the struggle for gender equality is an important indicator of success in the context of our work with men.

The assessment of our work contained in Dr Esack's presentation at the August 2000 seminar is very encouraging. He stated: "GETNET has solid and concrete programmes and while it is based in the Western Cape, works nationally. A number of the individuals who completed the CGE questionnaire said that they do gender work through GETNET."

We have learnt that emphasising programmatic work is critical to sustaining the work and to generating coherent innovations. Most importantly, the work with men needs to be placed more strongly within the context of the efforts to transform important South African institutions.



1996 Durban workshop

conducting research, presenting seminars and workshops; and

- producing materials and resources for use in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of organisational change strategies.

In December 1999, we presented a "Men and Organisational Change Workshop" in Cape Town. With it began the process of developing a broadened focus on organisational change and masculinity in our work.

The workshop was convened to develop a clearer picture of the behaviour of men in organisations, to clarify the pressures on organisations in the transition and to clarify the different responses of

and tradition on the reform of the legal framework as related to the position and condition of women and girls in South Africa, 1994-1999. Mel Adisu, project manager of the Cape Town City Council's Organisational Development and Transformation Unit, presented a workshop on: Exploring the tensions between "male identities" and the development of supportive and accountable management styles in the context of transforming local government in South Africa. Michael Blake, a human rights researcher and educator, currently contracted to write the Men and Organisational Change Guide, presented a paper entitled "Men



There ain't no such thing as superman

The men who took the streets in Cape Town to oppose the abuse of women and children missed the point, writes DAVID KAPP

Superman. Super man. Man super. Man who is super. Man who will save the world. Make the world a better place.

Masked pale man. Pale super masked man with long straight hair. Longhaired masked man in tights, pale and super.

Super man, in tights? Long hair? Pale male? Masked? Comic-book hero.

I was not at the "Men's March Against Abuse of Women and Children" that took place in Cape Town on Saturday November 25, what did that say? Here's what I say.

The poster and pamphlet advertising the march scared me off. I have described it at the start of this piece. All that was needed to

complete the picture was a white horse. Then we'd have a man on a white horse. A paleface on a white horse. Or, more lyrically, a white man on a white horse. On his way to save the country. All he needed to complete the picture was a rugby ball under his arm. And maybe a blonde baby under the other arm. Or, better still, in the new politically correct South Africa, a non-blonde baby!

I who have a problem being defined as "male": I reject the definition; I do not know what maleness or masculinity is; I do not bond with other male-types, watching the Bokke attempt the game of rugby, while drinking beer and burping, male-like.

I use lotion on my hands (and

publicly, at work). I photocopy student notes onto pink paper. I know what is going on in my fridge at home. I do not pee or spit in public. My car is not an extension of my penis. I am not shy to take sanitary pads off the shelf at Pick 'n Pay.

The poster and pamphlet reinforced the typical view of men and the view that men have of themselves: super-men, heroes; saviours of the world; saviours of women; strong, muscle-heads – sorry – muscle-bound, gladiator-types; macho men.

I do not wait for such public occasions as a "men's march" to take a stand against woman and child abuse (what about "men" – comrade-men included – who publicly support such events, but privately in their bedrooms behave like "men"?).

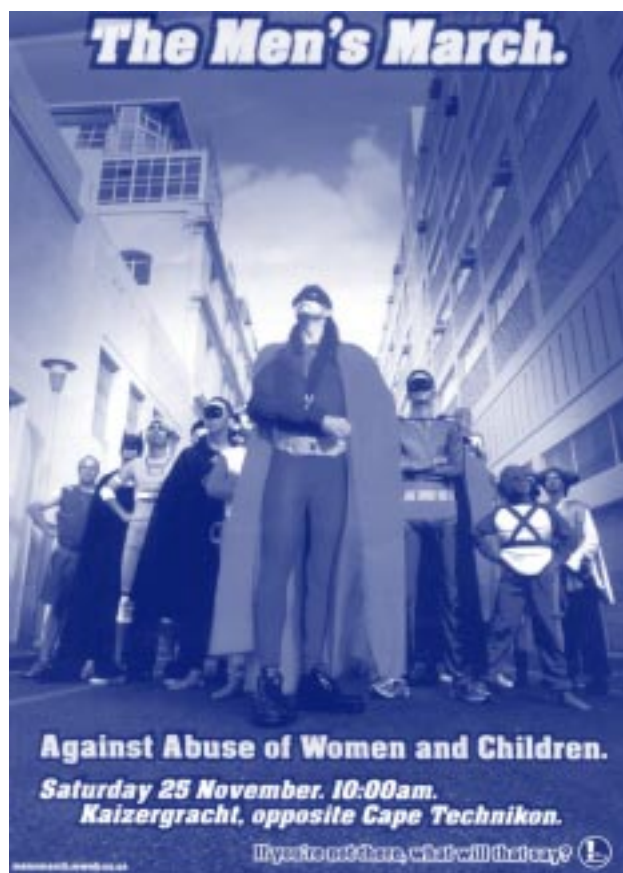
I wear T-shirts. Rape Crisis T-shirts, Women's Health Project T-shirts. I subscribe to *Agenda*. There are Child Abuse and Rape Crisis posters on my walls at home.

The girl kids (and their classmates) in the area where I live, who I've seen grow from nine and 10-year-olds into 13 and 14-year-olds now conscious of their bodies, come here at any time of day or night for yoghurt or fruit juice, or just to visit – and I scold them if they've not told their parents where they are.

If my women friends seek shelter or comfort (from "their" men or from the patriarchal world in general), they know where they can come, at any time of night. And they know they can get a back-rub without being interfered with.

I do not wait for a public occasion. The revolution will not be televised, brother*.

* With apologies to American protest singer Gil Scott-Heron who wrote a song of a similar title.



David Kapp is a gender activist based in Cape Town



The mal(e)aise in Cosatu

In spite of rhetoric to the contrary, research shows that oppressive masculinity is still the order of the day in Cosatu. A glimmer of hope lies in the fact that the federation has now committed itself to develop gender sensitivity amongst all union members.

BY MICHAEL BLAKE

It is important to applaud the tremendous strides made by black working class women in the recent period.

The progressive clauses in the constitution, backed by new legislation (especially on equality, employment equity and domestic violence) provide a favourable formal basis for advancing gender equality in South Africa.

Over the past 20 years especially, the overall social position of women has also advanced. Many more women are now in paid employment. Today they make up 37 percent of the formal workforce and up to 45 percent of economically active people in the country. These changes challenge the notion of a public-private divide between male 'breadwinners' and female 'housewives'. Millions of women are no longer as financially and personally dependent as they used to be.

Corresponding with these developments is a significant expansion of women's participation in social and political life. For example, women now constitute 36 percent of Cosatu's total membership.

Cosatu has arguably done more than any other mass organisation to consistently promote gender equality. In the federation there is no shortage of gender structures, of gender training and of resolutions adopted on gender issues.

At its congress in 1999, one resolution called on the federation and all its affiliates to "place

gender as an item on every constitutional structure and to take definite steps to achieve gender-related targets".

Another rallied Cosatu members to fight against all forms of discrimination against women, and to promote affirmative action in the workplace, unions, federation and society.

With gender firmly on the agenda of every structure and the fight for gender equality vigorously reaffirmed, things look good. But are they?

The 'joke' of equality

The recent resolutions are in part an admission that real change has not taken place. Shakespeare would probably have said, "Methinks the gentlemen doth resolve too much." The 1997 September Commission confirmed that despite progressive policies and resolutions on gender and women, there has been little or no progress in the federation.

The reports that have surfaced at congresses and other national meetings reflect a deep malaise. The percentage of women in leadership positions remains embarrassingly low. Twelve years after its establishment, there was not a single woman among the 10 general secretaries in Cosatu, and of the 204 organisers only 24 were women (September Commission report).

The gender structures are far from effective and, according to the September Commission, "(they) appear to have become bogged down in policy debates and processes, neglecting the tasks of implementation, organising and activism".

Referring to the consistent sidelining of gender in collective bargaining, Saccawu's gender co-ordinator stated that "gender equality issues or demands remain a neglected terrain" (Appolis).

A report on the last Cosatu congress indicated that the question of a gender quota system had been "dodged in the past". One Sarhwu woman delegate, frustrated by previous dilly-dallying, reportedly called on the congress "to once and for all resolve the question of women's representation" (The Shopsteward-on-line).

In 1998 the Cosatu education department and national gender committee wasted much time and money organising a gender studies course for the leadership and gender co-ordinators. The event was called off because "the leader-

'We should ask ourselves to what extent is masculinity a factor in this sorry state of affairs'

ship did not pitch up". In the words of a woman unionist, the message communicated by the leadership to men in the unions is that "this whole thing is a joke and we have better things to do" (Jurgensen).

These internal failings weaken the impact of Cosatu in its engagement of the bosses. In 1989 already, Jane Barrett, the then secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union, put her finger on an important contradiction, when she said: "It is all very well discussing the issue (of sexual harassment) as it manifests itself with management, but sexual exploitation was taking place within our own union structures" (quoted in Sutherland).

As a result of male obstruction, it took the federation seven years, from the first time it was proposed,



before Cosatu's central executive committee finally adopted a sexual harassment policy in 1995.

Many reasons are given for the failure to turn paper resolutions into reality. While the "joke" is on women, we should ask ourselves to what extent we are dealing with a "maleise"? In other words, to what extent is masculinity - what men do and how they are - a factor in this sorry state of affairs?

'Boys choir tendencies'

In South Africa, black working class men are bearers of the social "norms" of a deeply patriarchal and masculinist society. Statistics on domestic violence and sexual crimes tell an ugly tale. Male aggression and violence prevail not only in households but also in our communities, schools, workplaces and other spheres of life. In a recent

survey of male members of the South African Municipal Workers Union, 40 percent of respondents admitted to violently abusing their partners in the past 10 years (MRC, 1999).

The historically subordinate position of women is routinely reinforced and shaped by the dynamics of capitalist society. Both urban and rural women continue to bear the heavy burden of unpaid domestic labour. Even where women have seen socio-economic advancement, through increased participation in wage labour, they do so on unequal terms. They are concentrated in the lowest paid, more insecure or casual jobs. Furthermore, neo-liberalism has increased this gender inequality.

Assumptions of male superiority and privilege are pervasive in society. In workplaces and other

organisations, male prejudice, discrimination and other sexist practices routinely oppress women. Despite its great achievements, these trends persist even in Cosatu. Sexist jokes, unwanted sexual advances, male domination of meetings, male abuse of power, male devaluation of the contributions of female comrades, the ignoring of women's concerns, the sidelining of women comrades - these are common occurrences.

The Popcru report to Cosatu's national gender committee spoke of "a leadership who is not gender sensitive" and complained about the "boys choir" tendencies in the union (Jurgensen). This obviously was a reference to the male comrades who sing together loudly, drowning out female voices in the union.

Masculinities in the workplace

BY MSHENGU TSHABALALA

This GETNET seminar, held in Pretoria on May 8 and 9, 2000, provided a platform to debate and interrogate the topical and perhaps sensitive issue of men and organisational change. It is sensitive in the sense that even though they talk change and may even have implemented programmes to achieve change, many organisations remain silent when it comes to this topic.

To most, there is nothing wrong with the status quo of man and masculinities in the workplace and it should therefore not be questioned in terms organisational change and organisational development.

The seminar perpetuated a particular stereotype, which is that the issue of masculinities in the workplace only concerns the oppression of women by men. Though this is true, we should not forget that masculinities have been

largely used by men to suppress, oppress and prevent the progress and mobility of other men in organisations. Moreover, in some organisations and in life generally, masculinities are still employed on a racial basis as before. Specialists and proponents of organisational development should adopt a broader view, understanding and approach in this regard, if they do handle these issues at all.

The seminar did, however, succeed in creating awareness among attendees on the question of men and masculinities in the workplace. It is important to exactly identify these masculinities, their appendages and the actual dangers, threats and hazards they pose for the future of organisations. The responses showed that there was still resistance in organisations and among individuals to confront these issues. But the resistance, stereotyping and misunderstanding should be ironed out with

further seminars of this kind.

For me, the seminar was a launch pad for understanding and more research on the issue. Although my own organisation has not created space to debate and discuss these matters, the knowledge I have gained at the seminar will allow me to make a useful contribution when we develop our employment equity compliance processes. At home I have also adopted a new approach in relating to my family as father, husband and man.

These seminars should continue and an attempt should be made to target all the institutions of higher learning in particular. These are the places where potential leaders are developed and trained and it will allow them to go into the world not only preaching the gospel but ensuring that it is practised and becomes part of our daily lives.

Mshengu Tshabalala is an academic based at Vista University, Benoni

The September Commission reported that, despite the support of Cosatu's national office bearers for a quota system, "it seems that there is great resistance from a number of men in the federation. A quota system is a direct threat to male domination".

What lies behind this "great resistance"? Who are these males that are so threatened by women comrades and so bent on preserving 'male domination'? How can this be reconciled with the federation's commitment to gender equality?

It is clear that, in many respects, a form of male baasskap exists within Cosatu's ranks.

Wearing the pants, skirting the problem

Reading through Cosatu reports and adopted resolutions on gender, a distinct pattern emerges. The emphasis is almost entirely on the position of women in the federation and its affiliates. Rarely are the actions or conduct of men explicitly criticised. This male part of the problem is consistently skirted.

There are repeated references to sexism and the need for affirmative action and gender equality. However, sexist action by men and how men block affirmative action and reinforce gender inequality in the federation is not highlighted.

Issues are often raised in general or abstract terms. Popcru's national gender co-ordinator put her finger on the problem when she said, "Comrades are not yet able to internalise gender issues. This is still only taken up on a theoretical level" (Jurgensen). For example, there is reference to "educating male workers on the relationship between capitalism and oppression and exploitation of women, parental responsibility, etc". Yet, training aimed at addressing oppressive masculinity is not targeted nor can one assume it is covered under the "etc". On one

'A simple call for a moral crusade to sort out the bad behaviour of men is not an appropriate response'

rare occasion that men are singled out, the approach is patronising. A 1999 congress resolution called on the federation to "target groups of men to be trained on gender issues so as to assist in women development". Rather than obliging men to address their own oppressive masculinity, this only serves to reinforce the sense of male superiority

In sum, "women's issues" receive a full airing, yet nowhere is 'the issue of men' identified as a vital part of the equation of gender oppression.

In the vanguard against most oppression

The perpetuation of gender oppression by male comrades flies in the face of the history of militant, democratic, socialist politics within Cosatu and its affiliates. This tradition, guided by the principle of workers' unity, has opposed all forms of oppression and exploitation. This all-sided approach surely requires that oppressive masculinity also be directly addressed.

However, a push for "political correctness" or a simple call for a moral crusade to sort out the bad behaviour of men is not an appropriate response. The sources of oppressive masculinist practice run deep. They are historical and are reinforced by the dynamics of the capitalist system.

Gender relations within the working class are also complex. On the one hand, both male and female workers have the same interests and aspirations as a class. They suffer the under the same working and living conditions and share the same homes, beds and intimacy. Yet, at the same time, working class men oppress women and this male oppression is widely

tolerated or accepted as a norm. Under these circumstances, to simply highlight what ought to be will not in itself effect real change. This does not at all

mean that we have to wait for socialism before tackling the problem. Cosatu's fourth national gender conference in July 2000 made a commitment to develop gender sensitivity amongst all union members. This is a useful point of departure for addressing oppressive masculinity in the federation.

The routine conduct and attitude of men in Cosatu pose serious obstacles to the full participation of women members and are a deterrent to the recruitment of fresh layers of women. Collective organisation and united action – Cosatu's main weapons of struggle – are thereby undermined. As a start, male comrades need to acknowledge that their conduct has these negative consequences and is not in their real interests. Research into what men do that marginalises or silences women in the trade union movement would be of great assistance. Then, together with women comrades, men could identify concrete steps to challenge oppressive masculinity, as an integral part of the struggle against neo-liberal capitalism and for socialism.

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Councillors grapple with the gender noose

How does the demand to be gender friendly and progressive sit with our male local councillors? Are they oblivious of its importance, do they pay lip service to it or are they keen to level the playing fields? And what progress are we actually making with introducing gender equity in local government?

By **TONY SARDIEN**, TRAINING MANAGER

In 1999 GETNET took its Gender and Local Government Workshop programme (funded by the Austrian Development Co-operation through the North-South Institute) to seven dorps and small cities in the Northern Cape, Eastern Cape, Free State and Northern Province. The views of the participating male councillors are summarised in this article.

The objectives of the programme included:

- deepening the gender awareness of participants
- developing their understanding of the relationship between gender and local government
- enabling participants to develop strategies for achieving a greater gender balance within local government
- enabling participants to use the IDP (integrated development planning) and LED (local economic development) mechanisms and processes to advance gender equality

Women and men attended in roughly equal numbers and the workshop was really an opportunity for them to talk about power relations in local government. Usually, there was a great deal of tension at the beginning of the workshop. Men often felt that they would be called to account for things that they might be responsible for individually but also because they are men. Some women thought the workshop was a forum to express their criticism of their male colleagues'

commitment to gender justice. Women councillors also interpreted the workshop as one of the many occasions where they would once again have to "patiently explain" the difficulties women face in a male-dominated world and the validity of demands for the empowerment of women.

The workshop approach is guided by Sarah White's arguments, namely that change in gender relations cannot take place in a vacuum. This is the foundation for believing that men and masculinities must be made an issue in gender planning: if positive changes are to be achieved for women, men must change too. [White: 15: 1997]

The responses of male councillors is described and discussed according to a number of themes.

Participation of women

The analysis of the participation of women in local government is an important part of the workshop and is often a source of rich and varied discussions. In one such discussion, a facilitator said women based in communities or representing particular interests should be present when development planning happens. A male councillor responded, that to his understanding the community participation process did not involve the actual attendance of women at such meetings – the women would not be present but they should understand what

councillors were doing, he said. [GETNET: 1999b]

This statement can be interpreted in two ways:

- The councillor, who made many contributions in the workshop, was distinguishing between the community participation process that each local government structure is obliged to follow and the decision – making process of the executive or council. By law these council meetings must be open to the public. The workshop had already discussed at some length the quality of community participation, which created some sensitivity about the issue.
- The councillor was using an interpretation of the formal structures to re-assert his status as a leader. In doing so, he was prepared to contemplate the illegal marginalisation of women.

The attendance of representatives of women and/or women leaders at council meetings where development priorities are determined can enhance community participation and transparency in local government. Most importantly, such access can contribute to the development of women as leaders.

Similarly, the appointment of women as paid officials sometimes receives mixed support. In the workshop held in the Free State a male councillor explained: It is important that there is a need to 'balance out gender' according to the Employment Equity Act (EEA) A report must be written to establish what has been done in the municipality and how to implement gender equality. Also, women should not demand, they should play along with us. [GETNET: 1999b]

Here the male councillor appears to base his support for the appointment of women to management and their participation in local government on the provisions of the EEA. An interesting aspect of the statement is the speaker's claim to have the power to frame the terms and forms of women's struggle for gender equality. This claim is the result of well-worn habits that are informed by the image of men as leaders in all situations, in other words "natural leaders" by virtue of their gender. [GETNET: 1999b]

Leadership and management

The discussion on the participation of women usually surfaces a number of contradictory emotions and views on women leadership by the men in the workshops.

The view quoted here on the formal aspects of the building of women as leaders is often expressed in relation to the issue: The Constitution argued that there should be 50/50 representation of women and men. But I am concerned about the situation of women who are not fit for the positions involved, for example, the chief executive officer of the municipality. Will the pressure to conform to the 50/50 requirements to honour the rights of each person contribute to making good decisions? [GETNET: 1999b]

Other participants were vigorous in taking issue with this view, arguing that the speaker was using a double standard that enabled men in similar situations to be appointed and to function freely, usually with support of a dominant male leader. Such support is usually unconditional, overlooking mistakes or excusing them. [GETNET: 1999b]

Until very recently in South Africa, the political decision-making positions in councils have



Bloemfontein training

been, almost exclusively, the domain of men. In South Africa, as elsewhere, the relationships between dominant and subordinate men are also played out in the councils. Under apartheid, white male councillors, usually drawn from the middle class, made the decisions in local government in those areas demarcated for whites.

The appointment systems and procedures in local government structures tend to favour the employment of men in full-time, permanent positions. Men associated with the dominant group tend to occupy most, if not all the management and specialist technical positions. Women are usually employed in support positions, doing "general" work in subordinate positions.

Childcare

The popular gender education exercise, the 24 Hour Day day [Williams et al: 1996], was used in this series of workshops. Housework and childcare issues are often strongly debated between the women and the men.

In one of the workshops, a facilitator asked the men to explain their attitudes towards the washing of babies' napkins. One of them commented: Men do not wash napkins because it is unnatural, men think that they are superior to women and washing napkins is inferior work, best left to women. While I do not have a problem doing housework, it is our

culture for women alone to wash napkins. If your neighbours were to see you washing the napkins, then they would call you a fool. This will haunt you for the rest of your life. As men, we are afraid. My wife is due to give birth to another child. My wife and sisters are there to wash the napkins. In other words, the sisters will come. [GETNET: 1999a]

These are strenuous attempts to preserve an image of male dominance, in the course of which the speaker uses a number of arguments to make the case for male privilege and status:

- An argument based on culture that the specific role or work associated or assigned to a woman or a man is attributable to the shared culture of an identifiable group. Men usually interpret that "shared" culture.
- "Men do not wash napkins because it is unnatural." Here there is reference to the biological bases for the differences between women and men. The appeal is that women and men should not disturb the "natural order" or way of doing things. The anxiety

'The appointment of women as paid officials sometimes receives mixed support'

is clearly based on the fear of ridicule by male peers.

- Where men do have to shoulder the burden, there is a shifting of the responsibility for reproductive work to other women, in this case: "The sisters will come".

Sexuality

In discussion of the differences between women and men's workloads as these emerged in the 24 Hour Day exercise, one male participant explained: Some of the women are working in escort agencies. Some women are spending time in the shebeens.



They believe that they are exercising their rights. Women should not advertise sex in a shebeen. They lose their self-respect. We should go back to ubuntu and then we will be able to respect each other. [GETNET: 1999a]

Men usually interpret women's expression of their sexuality as something that they need to control. In terms of the dynamics within the workshop, the male participant was trying to steer the discussion to areas where he did not feel as exposed. Perhaps he thought that the social prohibitions that impact on women with regard to speaking about sex and sexuality in public would help to "silence" and stifle a discussion that was exposing him. Fortunately, this did not take place, the women participants explained carefully and patiently the possible reasons for some women turning to sex work and also outlined community-based responses to dealing with the men and women involved in sex work.

In the South African context, women's expression of their sexuality is subject to rigid and strict controls. High incidence and levels of violence often accompany heterosexual relationships, with some men and boys claiming as their right full control over their partners' bodies. The story could then also be interpreted as the reproduction of the stereotype of the "loose, available woman", the other side of which is the man who is supposedly "powerless to resist the schemes of wily women".

Only one of the almost 20 local authorities represented in the seven workshops had adopted a sexual harassment policy.

Taking forward gender issues in local government

The male councillors' responses to the gender issues raised in the workshops were consistently honest and did provide a very clear indication of the thinking of some men who are very influential in their communities.

The final session of each workshop included the formulation of action plans. For example, the Virginia workshop participants resolved to:

- Initiate the formation of a gender committee
- Initiate gender awareness workshops and advocacy in the Transitional Local Council
- Train a gender unit
- Develop a gender mainstreaming strategy

The Welkom workshop participants resolved:

- To ensure that the employment equity committee implements the affirmative action policy.
- That the council should strive to promote skills development for women, targeting the indigents' programme and involving the welfare department's head and the treasury.
- To ensure the integration of women's needs into the budget by 2001 and that a research, training, monitoring and planning programme supports this objective.
- To build the gender awareness and sensitivity of men through role models and educational programmes.

Realising intentions

Since the presentation of the workshop in Pietersburg, Puleng Mashangoane, the chairperson of Gender Working Group of the Northern Province Local Government Association, has indicated that the representatives of the five transitional local councils of the Central Region of the province had formed a committee to take forward gender issues.

Some of the region's councillors and officials participated in a five-day study visit to Cape Town during which which they were introduced to women empowerment initiatives on the West Coast, Boland and in the Cape Town metropole.

Ward councillor Molefe

Mokoena, responsible for part of the Meloding settlement in Virginia, has reported that subsequent to the workshop he and others have initiated gender equality circles, which are groups of women and men who meet to exchange ideas about gender issues.

Conclusions

For GETNET the experience of presenting this workshop programme has indicated the usefulness of the application of our perspective on "gender change".

In order to achieve gender equality, transforming institutions is an important goal, and this should include the crucial acknowledgement that gender relations are power relations. Changing power relations necessarily involves "engaging and moving" men in order to facilitate access to resources.

For men in general, and male councillors in particular, the gender work now and in the future, means active participation in transforming their own outlooks and assumptions, their organisational cultures and building partnerships with women and other men to achieve gender equality.

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A case of sexism from the rooftops

BY RONEL SCHEFFER

Sexists should have no place to hide. This seemed to be the message coming from an encouraging number of women in Cape Town, where a mayoral candidate stood accused of gross sexist behaviour during the 2000 local government election campaign.

Now the Mother City's mayor, Peter Marais did his best to suppress discussion of the accusations but only succeeded in looking the political dinosaur in a democratic age. Women across the city's many divides responded by marching to the provincial legislature demanding his resignation; they filled the letters columns of the local press and kept the radio stations buzzing with calls. Mr Marais was finally ambushed by women – into yet another non-response – at a public meeting called for a different reason.

Male indignation reached a high point when the premier of the Western Cape, Gerald Morkel, suggested that the complainant, former provincial gender equity minister Freda Adams, needed "treatment". The Cape Times, equally gender astute, saw fit to repeat this actionable comment in a headline.

It is an open question whether Marais has learnt anything about gender power relations in the course of this debacle. Premier Morkel clearly has some distance to go: at a public function in November I saw him encroaching on the personal space of a senior black nurse with an embarrassingly long "hug". Come to think of it, he must have been straining also to prove his non-racial credentials.

Both Marais and Morkel

steadfastly refused to take on board Ms Adams' complaints that Marais had made a number of unacceptable sexist remarks to her at a DA candidate selection meeting in September. She says Marais told her in the presence of DA

to the incident. Ms Adams believes women generally refused to let the matter die because they sensed that if male politicians could offend and insult fairly high-profile women with impunity, the implication was that ordinary women would still have to put up with this – and worse – for a long time to come.

DA spokesmen have denied knowledge of the incident between Mr Marais and Adams but Adams says she has privately received support from a number of senior Democratic Party colleagues.



colleagues that she was "not behaving like a woman", called her "ugly" and "a pain in the backside" and said if he looked like her he "would run and hide away".

Subsequently, she has made further detailed sexual harassment allegations against Marais and she is now suing both Marais and Morkel for sizeable amounts for defamation and damage to personal dignity.

Marais's first reaction was to try and pin a "storm in a tea cup" label

When she sought redress from the premier, she was apparently expected to drop the matter so as not to embarrass the party in the election campaign. Adams said she regarded this as asking "too high a price" for active participation in politics. She subsequently resigned from the provincial cabinet.

She says Morkel tried to downplay her complaints, saying that she could expect to have to cope with sexist colleagues in the "big league" of politics. Ms Adams also alerted the premier to the fact that she had felt sexually harassed on occasion by unnamed cabinet colleagues. Marais's name was also mentioned in regard to specific sexual harassment allegations by a NNP female colleague from Oudtshoorn.

Gender activists say sexist put-

'The women politicians don't even have to say anything – the men are threatened by their mere presence'



downs are still a common experience for women in politics. Marais' initial refusal to participate in a national radio debate with his ANC election opponent Lynne Brown could be interpreted as yet another gender snub, they believe.

"The women (politicians) don't even have to say anything – the men are threatened by their mere presence," said Keith Ruiters, a clinical psychologist and lecturer at the University of the Western Cape who has a special interest in gender relations.

Tony Sardien, training manager of GETNET, said Marais' alleged

Town feminist campaigner, who describes herself as a "post-feminist" these days, and did not wish to be named, had a dissenting view.

She said she felt the two politicians were "equally obnoxious and deserved each other". She did not believe Adams could lay claim to being a liberated woman and that she was merely using the gender issue to give herself political credibility.

"I heard her on the radio the other day and it confirmed my worst suspicions. For her to now jump on the gender bandwagon really this is a non-issue." She was referring to a radio interview in which Adams was apparently persuaded, among other things, to pose in her bathing suit with a lion.

However, Sardien disagreed with this position on support for Adams. "When Freda Adams challenges the 'male order' she deserves and should expect the support of all women and men opposed to sexist practices and beliefs," he said.

Ruiters said also underlying the "very patriarchal response" attributed to Marais was the belief that there was a universal standard for how to be either a woman or a man.

He said such put-downs were a strategy used consciously or unconsciously by men – who thought their power was being threatened – to denigrate and devalue women.

"He was verbalising what a whole lot of men agree with but would not necessarily have said in the same way. If he can denigrate her, he can take away some of her power. At a psychological level he is in a sense also representing all men because all men instinctively are terrified by women."

Ruiters said he would be interested to know how the alliance colleagues who were present during the incident responded. "Some might have laughed it away, others might have

humoured him (Marais)."

Perpetrators of such abuse can only get away with it in an environment where they felt support for their actions, says Ruiters.

Charles Maisel, co-ordinator of the "5 in 6" project, a Catholic Church NGO that works with men and women to combat violence against women, said despite the advent of democracy, privately many male politicians generally still favoured systems and structures which gave them "almost all-encompassing power".

He said his project was trying to spread the message that "good men and good leaders" did not practise sexism at home or in the workplace.

"A classical trait of the abuser is to hit on the emotional side. They keep their wives in check by telling them they're fat and ugly," said Maisel. "And if this is how the leader acts as a man other men will replicate his behaviour. But sooner or later people have to take a stand against their leadership."

Jane Bennett, an academic at the University of Cape Town's African Gender Institute, said the alleged remarks were made in language which has long been used within the "arsenals of misogyny".

"This (language) would include insulting a woman person through her body, or assuming that someone is idiotic as a result of their gender," said Dr Bennett.

In conflict between people of different genders relying on this language was usually an indication – among other things – of sheer indolence, she said. "The assumption is that one doesn't have to work very hard to prove a point: the culture you ascribe to has 'proved' that point for centuries. People who do this are wildly out of touch with reality, and probably a little boring."

Ronel Scheffer is a writer based in Cape Town

'If this is how the leader acts as a man other men will replicate his behaviour. But sooner or later people have to take a stand against their leadership.'

outburst against Adams showed how the country's public institutions and organisations still worked in ways that kept women out of decision-making positions.

He said while the context of the remark that Adams was "not behaving like a woman" was not very clear, the remark itself was not unusual, "especially when men try to exercise influence and control over women in personal and organisational situations".

He explained: "Marais is 'calling Adams to order', that is the patriarchal order of male dominance and female subordination. In this view of the world, being a woman means subordination to men in all respects and in all situations.

"This view allows men the opportunity to make almost all the important decisions. Consequently, they control almost all the resources in our society."

Most gender activists approached for comment felt Marais' alleged remarks were out of line, but a well-known Cape

Celebrating good sense

Many people - women and men - will rather run a mile than volunteer to take part in a gender workshop. They're losing out on a liberating and empowering experience, says a first-time gender trainee.

By ANGELA CRAIG

Thinking gender is like receiving one's senses. Except senses don't think.

Or do they? We feel, know, learn, guess, understand, become familiar with, sense – through our senses.

So imagine a world which “thought” through its senses. Such a world would surely feel the senselessness of the institutionalised oppression of the females of its population. It would, ultimately, see how damaging it is to men and women, girls and boys. It's the same with any form of oppression: usually the oppressors take longer to “see” that oppression of the other is damaging to the self as well.

GETNET's Gender Co-ordinators Workshop and Women's Budget Training Workshop are two courses – quite different in content, the one building on the other in many ways – which address the violently familiar. And then, for some of us, the violently unfamiliar as well.

What happened for me by about the fourth day of these trainings was a kind of violent explosion. The kind one waited for throughout one's secondary and tertiary education, and which never came. The kind one would imagine happens when somebody who hasn't heard sound for 32 years suddenly receives treatment or a hearing aid and hears for the first time, or receives sight after an eye operation.

The Co-ordinators Workshop takes one into the heart of the 24-hour day of women and men. It takes us into our roles and activities in the kitchen and living room, at the feast day or

celebration, in the vocational and professional field, in the formal and informal workplace. I say violently familiar, because as column after column of simple analysis of these simple, known things, done by a diverse group of people, adds up to a clear picture in which minimising women and maximising men is clearly the modus operandi of our society at every level, one begins to experience waves of quite violent emotion. Including violent spasms of hope.

Why hope? The workshop goes on to teach frameworks which can be picked up and applied to various settings. A star spanner there, a clamp here, an electric drill over there. Or in my case, tippex/ink remover. It contextualises things in the Women-In-Development (WID) or Gender-And-Develop-ment (GAD) models, making sense of certain things one had read of but never quite grasped before.

Working with case studies throughout, the workshop ends with an introduction to the “web”, a kind of graphic “picture” or exoskeleton on which to hang plans for institutionalising or mainstreaming gender equity.

I am writing here of a workshop of which the second phase has not taken place yet. This is because the entire programme insists on reflection on your own organisation

or department or work. The second phase is planned a few months after phase one. In the interim period participants are encouraged to implement a chosen gender strategy or project or policy within their workplace. Consultation with GETNET is invited at all stages, and depends on the participant. Presentation back to the group takes place after a couple of months, when one has the opportunity to relate to the group as a group of consultants.

This method of working should give an idea of GETNET's approach to teaching and learning in this workshop: respect, openness and





Angela Craig (right) at a co-ordinator's workshop

the inclusion of case study material from a wide range of work settings.

This is where analyses of government and other budgets become critical to project planning, and to lobbying and advocacy initiatives. The question I kept asking through the two days of the Women's Budget Training Workshop was, why are we not introduced to the concept of what a government budget looks like at high school? An analysis of any power relationship – which any citizen needs to feel and become a part of the governance of the country – requires a knowledge of what a government is, and how it works.

We cannot see how women and men are placed in society until we see what is spent on them, and



what is invested in them. This was the “violently unfamiliar” part of the GETNET training. Being offered some examples of government budgets, seeing what is prioritised through budget allocations, gave a whole new perspective on how social engineering works.

It was like looking at state secrets. I mean, what exactly does a primary health policy mean if a prosthetics and forensic unit in a government hospital can spend more on outsourced laundry services than on staffing, equipment or patient services?

In a sense gender is linked to the distribution of energy in a given society. Money is a primary form of energy on our planet. Therefore, whether understanding the gender dynamics in a nuclear family, a rural community, an NGO, or in state policy, money matters will tell an instant and graphic story. It becomes a form of cartoon.

For me this the most critical area in which GETNET is working: looking into the heart of the dollar or rand or yen to see whether woman is written there. The violence is felt when one discovers

not only that mostly she is not present, but also the extent to which she is absent.

I left a week of workshops with the feeling that our country would do well to mainstream their programmes into secondary schools without further ado. In this way, perhaps we women and men would waste less time mulling over our powerlessness.

Two of the main things I learnt in these workshops, as an NGO worker developing and implementing projects for refugee women:

- You cannot implement gender equity, or even basic WID initiatives, if poverty alleviation and basic needs are not addressed first or simultaneously. This includes the basic funding needs of any self-respecting organisation, which means being mindful of the difference between practical gender needs (PGNs) and strategic gender needs (SGNs).
- You cannot address gender issues with women alone. It is as futile as talking only to slaves about slavery.

Let me illustrate this point with

the example of a typical woman refugee in South Africa: she is a single mother of two young children, unemployed, unsubsidised, dependent on a boyfriend (who beats her but feeds her children) and dependent on male refugee reception officers in the Department of Home Affairs to renew her Section 22 asylum-seeker permit every three months. These officials wouldn't know a gender-based asylum claim if it bit them on the leg.


She is betrayed by her country's inability to protect her, betrayed by South Africa's Refugees Act which forbids a Section 22 permit-holder to work for the first six months in the country and yet makes no provision for accommodation or food.

This woman doesn't want to talk gender. She wants to beg for food, for somewhere safe to sleep, and for school fees and uniforms for her children. She wants to know how to survive urban violence, crime and almost daily xenophobic attacks.

Angela Craig is the co-ordinator of the Refugee Adult Education and Skills Training Programme in Cape Town

Networking with a purpose

BY PETHU SEROTE, DIRECTOR OF GETNET



Networking is a term used so frequently in different conversations that it has come to mean many things, depending on the context and on the user.

We must accept the validity of each meaning in its particular context, but I would like to venture exploring one of the shades of these meanings.

The nature of the development work most community-based and non-governmental organisations are involved in, requires a high level of networking. The achievement of development goals involve multiple strategies and inputs, and these go beyond what many organisations

singly can supply because each invariably has a specific focus area, which defines and limits their contribution towards achieving the goal.

Another limitation is the size and capacity of our organisations. Even the largest of them are too small to tackle the development problems confronting us, on the scale needed for effectiveness and maximal impact.

Networks play an important role in sustaining the work that we do: they serve to co-ordinate the activities of different stakeholders, to increase the capacity and effectiveness of the different network members and to bring

about a cross-fertilisation of ideas as well as the sharing and exchange of experiences and resources.

Lest we think that networks are so useful that they should be mushrooming easily in the development field, on the contrary – network-building is very difficult in the circumstances which civil society organisations find themselves. Shrinking resources have forced us in the direction of cut-throat competition that undermines the very values we profess to represent. In recent years we have seen very many examples of failed networks and partnerships. The struggle for survival in our sector has also cut into the



time we have available for pursuing this valuable activity.

In spite of all these constraints, it would seem that network building – and networking with like-minded organisations and individuals – is crucial for the survival of CBOs and NGOs. This elevates its status from something that “just happens” to that of an activity which should be consciously and tenaciously pursued. This should be done with the understanding that it is one of the ways in which the sector can be strengthened and resources be shared. More importantly, there is an organisational and personal gain to be made in learning from one another, thereby enhancing our skills and knowledge.

GETNET was conceptualised and established as a network. The idea originated around 1990/1 among a group of gender activists, trainers and researchers, who formed an informal network to support one another’s work.

In 1992, the network received a boost when some of its members underwent training in gender planning methodology in London. Having had the advantage of spending time together and forming as a group, they came back energised and continued networking in a more formal way. The



Elizabeth Schutter of GETNET at NGO week, Durban 2000

group held several meetings, exchanging ideas and formulating strategies, and when they felt ready, they initiated the process of formalising the network as an organisation, which started to function in 1995.

GETNET has tried since its formation to continue to build the network and to consciously encourage, through its work and contacts, the building of other networks to function independently in their own contexts. The reward has been an ever-growing circle of people who have co-operated with us – and with one another as well – in taking the issues and work of gender equality forward. There

have also been benefits in respect of expanding the capacity of our organisation and providing it with exposure to new contexts and areas of work. Our partnership approach has enabled us to work with different organisations in this country, and also in the SADC region and in East and West Africa.

One of our strategies has been to initiate contact between the sector and government and donor representatives, which has certainly contributed to more meaningful networking. However, this strategy will have to be sustained because, like all other relationships, networks need to be consistently nurtured to pay dividends.

See GETNET’s 2001 Training programme on the back cover



GETNET TRAINING PROGRAMME JANUARY – JUNE 2001

The Policy Makers Programme

Workshop 5-7 April 2001. Aimed at councillors and officials of local government structures. The programme provides education and information resources and skills training on the formulation, implementation and monitoring of policies. It aims to enhance the competencies of policy makers and change agents to develop and implement gender sensitive policies in strategic sectors. Participants have access to information and resources related to institutional transformation.

Gender Co-ordinators Programme

Workshop 14-16 March 2001. Aimed at gender co-ordinators and focal persons in NGOs, CBOs, trade unions and government. Provides education and information resources and skills training on the formulation, implementation and monitoring of gender policies. Aims to enhance the competencies of gender co-ordinators/change agents to develop and implement gender sensitive policies. Enables participants to analyse existing policies for gender sensitivity.

Masculinities Programme

Workshop 27-29 March 2001. Aimed at gender practitioners, managers, programme co-ordinators in all sectors. Contributes to building partnerships between women and men for mainstreaming gender equality in institutions and organisations. This involves the provision of education and information resources on the importance of gender equality, forms of masculinity and the roles of men in organisational change.

Training of Trainers (TOT) Programme

4 - 11 May 2001. Aimed at educators, training officers, employment equity officers, diversity programme staff, human resources personnel, Southern African based trade unionists responsible for gender education and training. Provides knowledge, skills and resources to design, co-ordinate and facilitate effective gender education and training programmes in diverse settings.

The Policy Makers, Gender Co-ordinators and Masculinities Programmes are also offered on a consultancy basis

Consultancy services

Consultancy services are offered in specialised areas. These include gender training, gender analysis of policy, gender and organisational change, national and international instruments and strategies for gender equality. Provided on specific request from clients.

Cost and contracts for GETNET training programmes and consultancies are negotiated with individual clients. Training in all programmes is grounded in the specific institutional or organisational realities of our clients. Training takes place in participatory, group-based training workshops. Depending on the needs identified, the duration of the programme can vary. Each programme comprises a combination of modules to fit the needs of the clients.

For more information contact Elizabeth Schutter at GETNET, Tel 697 5355.



Issued by GETNET
17 Garlandale Crescent
PO Box 333 Athlone Cape Town
South Africa



Tel 2721 697 5355
Fax 2721 697 5560
Email info@getnet.org.za
Website www.getnet.org.za

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