

**Commission on the Status of Women  
Fifty-third session  
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**INTERACTIVE EXPERT PANEL**

**Capacity-building for mainstreaming a gender perspective into national policies and programmes to support the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including care-giving in the context of HIV/AIDS**

**Written statement\***

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\* The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations.





## **Potential Solutions:**

### **1. Slowing the spread of AIDS**

To turn this situation around it is crucial that the following strategies be embarked upon;

- Implement prevention strategies that work: comprehensive sexuality education, male and female condoms, PMTCT, male circumcision, partner reduction, education for girls, economic strategies for women, and gender transformative work with men.
- Ensuring widespread provision of ART including through treatment and rights literacy.
- Reducing viral load through provision of highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART).

### **2. Reducing the burden of care**

To achieve this it is vital that states and donors;

- Provide a mix of cash transfers and public services—free provision of electricity, water, day care and primary and secondary education, health services including psychosocial support in schools and community centres.
  - Economies of scale.
  - Good public sector employment.
- Donors to fund more care work.
- Additional aid for health systems capacity sorely needed with attention to debates about cuts to AIDS funding.

### **3. Activism and Advocacy**

- Efforts to reduce the impact of structural adjustment type policies and to strengthen political will require strengthened civil society activism.
- Useful models exist—organizations such as ACT UP, GLOBAL HEALTH GAP, TAC, ITPC.
- Requires additional training and technical

**Reuben Mokaë:** an AIDS activist who was involved with in work with men in South Africa stated “*Last October my wife passed on due to AIDS. It has been one of the most difficult times for my three boys and me. Now, though, life is starting to get back to normal. We often talk about her with the boys as a healing process. Sometimes we cry together holding hands when we do this*”. Reuben has since passed on but had spent valuable time with his children. This is not usual in a society where child minding is seen exclusively as a women’s job. Reuben represents a growing trend of men who are breaking with this stereotype and take up the responsibility of looking after their children.

- **Hlokomela case study:** Sonke has been working with Farm workers in the area of Hoedspruit in Limpopo, South Africa. The work involved working with Supervisors in the Farm in an area where gender-based violence and HIV prevalence was very high. Very few men participated in the CVT programmes in the area. Majority of the ‘Nompilo’s Home Based Care Workers were women. Today after just over two years of engagement with this community there are more male Home Based Care Workers and higher uptake of VCT. Police report fewer incidences of domestic gender based violence.
- **Nkandla case study:** Sonke through support from UNICEF has been working with boys and Men in Nkandla on a project we call ‘Responsible fatherhood’ for the last two years. We are now seeing more fathers availing themselves for their children and taking a keen interest in the lives of the children. Significant in this area is that the Mayor who has since become the champion of children’s rights and protection insists that all development plans proposed for the Council must of necessity include interests of children and women. Nothing gets included in the local Integrated Development programme unless it can clearly be linked to positive impact on the lives of women and children in the area. This is significant in that through engaging with men in the area, the work is now impacting directly on policy and spending mandates in the local government.
- **Steven Ngobeni:** “The moment I decided to get married I told myself I wanted to be an example of change in my community. One thing I became very strong with was when they said she must go to the veld (bush) and fetch firewood. Just because she is the wife it is what she is expected to do! But even when I made the means to get the firewood, there were still problems because it is not the firewood that they want. They want to see this woman go into the veld and fetch that firewood and come back with the firewood on her head. It is a very challenging situation. Some people are saying horrible things against me and my wife (but), I have to take a stand so the society can see that change is inevitable.” The quote from Steven demonstrate how a man living in an environment governed by Traditional system of leadership is prepared to challenge it and face the consequences for that decision all in the quest for gender equality.

### **What principles should inform work with men?**

1. Acknowledge and support men’s positive contributions
2. Avoid simplistic gender stereotyping
3. Affirm women’s rights
4. Avoid paternalistic framing of “protecting women”
5. Policies and programs must be sensitive to diversities among men.
6. Address the social and structural determinants of health
7. Make the connection between homophobia and rigid models of masculinity

## Conclusion

There can be no doubt as to the fact that men can and are willing to change in the quest for gender equality. It is true that currently the burden of care in many communities remains disproportionately on the shoulders of women and girls. It is our view that this has to change and can change. It requires focused work with men. It is also key that we review government policies to ensure that there are appropriate transfers from the fiscus to support care work. With the huge numbers of people affected by HIV and AIDS especially in the sub-Saharan Africa the burden is just too much to be left in the hands of communities. The state has to come in and support the efforts. This will go a long way towards changing the situation for the better. Michel Sidibé UNAIDS Executive Director affirms this assertion in a recent letter to partners where he states, *“As we call for a US\$ 25 billion dollar investment, I am also calling for greater accountability of governments, businesses, the UN and activists to make the money work better for people. All programmes should be cost effective, strive to eliminate inefficiencies in service delivery and reduce unit costs. Better aligned and coordinated donor support will also increase the impact of investments.”*

RW Connell (2003) asserts, “If we want large numbers of men to support and implement gender equality policy, it will be necessary for that policy to speak, in concrete and positive ways, to their concerns, interests, hopes and problems. The political task is to do this without weakening the drive for justice for women and girls that animates current gender equality policy.”<sup>xvi</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> This text was prepared by Bafana Khumalo and Dean Peacock, Co Directors of Sonke Gender Justice Network, South Africa

<sup>ii</sup> Human Rights Watch (2003), Policy Paralysis: A Call for Action on HIV/AIDS Related

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xv Pulerwitz J, Barker G, Segundo M (2004). "Promoting Healthy Relationships and HIV/STI Prevention for Young Men: Positive Findings from an Intervention Study in Brazil. *Horizons Research Update*". Washington, DC: Population Council.

<sup>xvi</sup> Connell, R.W (2003), Background paper prepared for the Expert Group Meeting on "The role of men and boys in achieving gender equality", organized by the Division for the Advancement of Women, October 2003, Brasilia, Brazil.