

Masculinities and violence against women and girls in Ukraine and Russia: engaging men in the gender equality agenda

Charlie Walker

BEARR Trustee and

Associate Professor of Sociology, University of Southampton

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In Search of Stability: Masculinity and Wellbeing in contemporary Russia

- 60 respondents between 25 and 40 years old, Ul'yanovsk and Moscow 2012-15
- Exploring sources of and barriers to men's wellbeing in a period of comparative 'stability'
- Semi-structured interviews and ethnographic fieldwork focusing on men's work, family and leisure lives



Masculinities and Transition: Enduring Privilege?

Four-country study (Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Egypt and Turkey) exploring the changing shape of masculinities in transition countries.

In total 160 informants – 79 men and 81 women – were interviewed ranging from EBRD staff and corporation/firm managers to employees and small-scale entrepreneurs to community members.



Masculinity and violence



- We've seen the emergence of "a general discourse about masculinity as inherently violent and bully-oriented" (Atkinson 2008: 48).
- Masculinity has been used to explain: "school violence, gang violence, knife and gun violence, drug-related violence, sexual violence, sports violence, theft-related violence, domestic violence, crowd protest violence, violence against the environment, faith-related violence, violence against children, war and genocide, violence against animals, violence at work, hate crimes and homicide" (ibid.).

Theorizing the link between masculinity and violence

- Psychological approaches – associate various psychopathologies with masculinity; situated contexts lead men to lose control of their impulses (eg ‘frustration-aggression theory’; male perpetrators of violence sociopathic, misogynistic, suffer disorders (eg Coperhaver, Lash and Eisler 2000).
- Sociological approaches – have focused more on ‘cultural and structural pathologies that prohibit men from fulfilling their social scripts as providers, caretakers, and authority figures’ (i.e. social disorganisation theories, anomie and strain theories – eg Whitehead 2002)
- ‘Social learning theories’ – argue that some men’s understandings of masculinity, consciously or unconsciously, include a belief in the ability to wield violence over others, which is then activated through contextual and situational factors – eg the social context of the dysfunctional family produces stress and aggression, and men would often draw on the script of male violence in that context

The real problem with toxic masculinity is that it assumes there is only one way of being a man

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Ideas of masculinity have changed yet toxicity stays the same. Sundry Photography/Shutterstock

‘Acts of aggression and a need to dominate others might often be considered as natural behaviour for men – especially for, but not limited to, those in power... but this idea, which is based on the assumption that more aggressive men have higher testosterone levels, has been widely refuted scientifically... Just as not all men perpetrate acts of toxic masculinity, not all fit a standard mould of manhood’ Ashley Morgan, 2019

Pro-feminist men's advocacy: engaging men in gender equality

- Gendering men – international agencies and NGOs have actively mobilized and applied understandings of masculinity and violence through educational programmes
- We have seen 'a vast range of policy and practical interventions on, and with, men and boys, as well as policy studies thereof. Indeed, political questions, questions relating to policy, and practice questions around men and boys, have also been increasingly recognized as important in the struggle for gender justice worldwide' – Michael Flood, *Engaging Men and Boys in Violence Prevention*, 2019



MenEngage Alliance
working with men and boys for gender equality

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ABOUT US

**WE'RE WORKING WITH BOYS
AND MEN TO PROMOTE
GENDER EQUALITY AROUND
THE WORLD**



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Engendering Men: Evidence on Routes to Change for Gender Equality (EMERGE)

Our goal is to enable stronger leadership for working with boys and men to promote gender equality. We will do this by gathering, inter-relating and analysing evidence and lessons. These will be strategically disseminated in targeted and accessible formats for improved learning, policy and practice.

Background

A wide range of initiatives and interventions now exist for engaging men and boys aimed at increasing men's support for gender equality and decreasing men's use of violence against women. Initiatives that seek to change norms, often using collective action, connect up individual, community and institutional levels and target young people are seemingly most effective in this. Not enough, however, is known about

- what works best when it comes to changing social norms
- the institutional arrangements and structures which sustain or shift these norms and attitudes
- 'which men' (and women) need to become engaged at different levels, 'why' and 'how'.

- <https://www.ids.ac.uk/projects/engendering-men-evidence-on-routes-to-change-for-gender-equality-emerge/>

ALBANIA

Albanian counselling line
Counseling Line for Men and Boys

BULGARIA

Roditeli Association (meaning "Parents")

RUSSIA

ANNA – National Center for the Prevention of Violence

KYRGYZSTAN

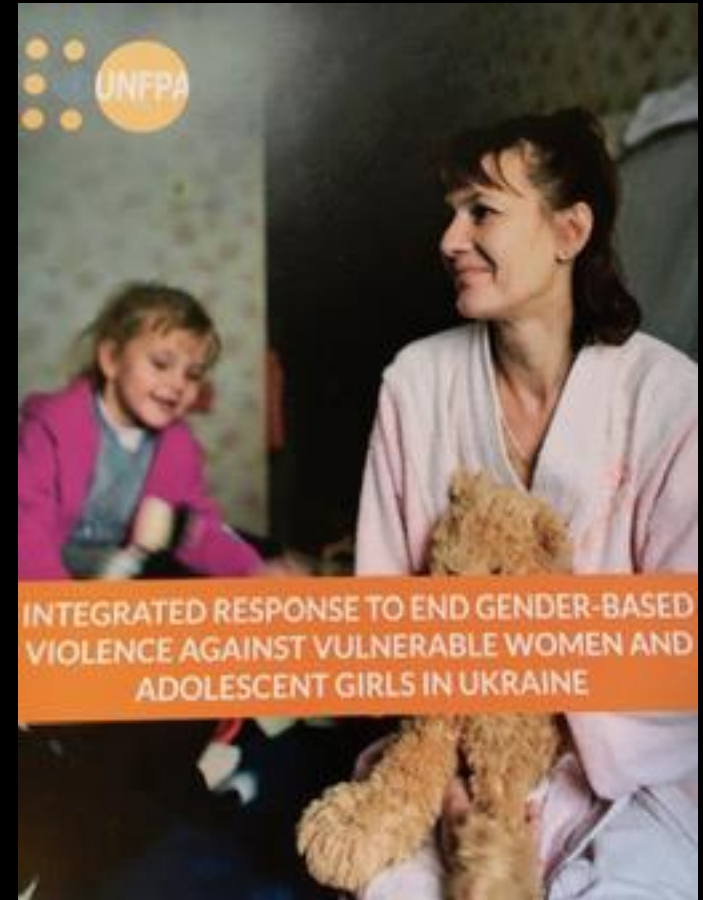
PF Open Line
Общественный фонд Равные права и возможности

MOLDOVA

Societatea de Planificare a Familiei din Moldova

Gender-related NGOs in Ukraine

- Pro-feminist men's advocacy NGOs
 - Men against Violence, established in the city of Kherson in 2004
 - National Network of Men-Leaders Against Violence, founded in 2009
- Other men's NGOs
 - Army veteran groups and other 'traditionalist' organisations
- NGO work on gender-based violence is women-focused: provision of shelters, psychological support, healthcare specialists



Grim findings

Men in Ukraine are holding fast to gender norms, the study finds – and the consequences for women and girls are dire.

The majority of men believe showing signs of weakness and submission, whether at home or in public, is disgraceful. Roughly 82 per cent say that women, too, should adhere to traditional gender roles, like cooking, cleaning and caring for children.

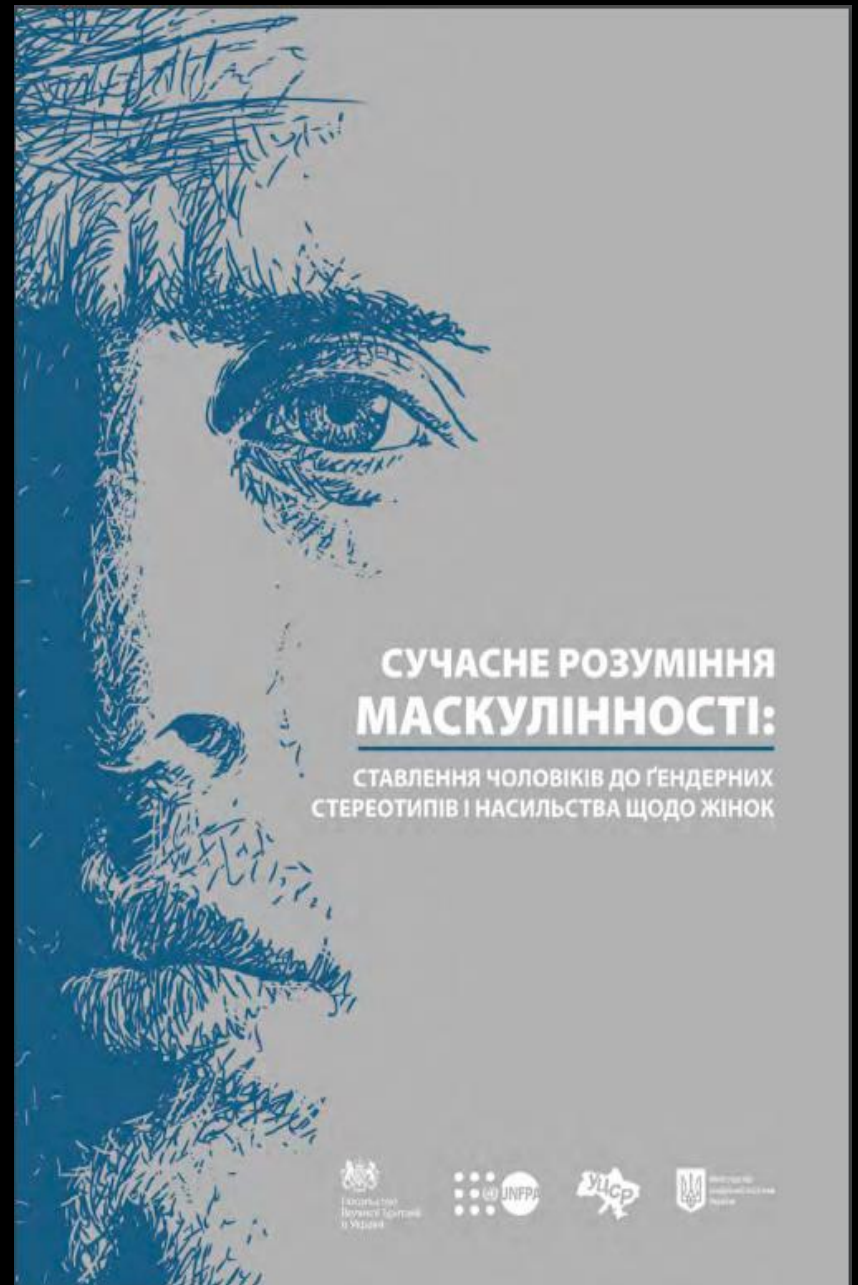
Yet men are going to violent lengths to enforce this division.

“My friend’s wife tried to have the final say in everything and make final decisions, because her mother behaved like that in her family,” a 36-year-old interviewed for the study said. “My friend physically punished her several times – and all [her] attempts stopped. There is peace and tranquility in the family now.”

This account is [far from unique](#).

One in ten Ukrainian men believe that women should tolerate violence to keep their families intact – to devastating effect.

Each year in Ukraine, over a million women become victims of [gender-based violence](#) – though the actual figure is likely much higher, since only an estimated 30 per cent of women come forward to report it.



Gender equality legislation and action in Ukraine

- Ukraine is a signatory to: Sustainable Development Goals, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and, more recently, the Ukraine-EU Association Agreement.
- BUT embeddedness of gender stereotypes across society results in a large gap between *de jure* commitments and *de facto* delivery: the gender pay gap in 2014 placed Ukraine 67th among 142 countries ranked by the Gender Equality Index at 23.7% against an EU27 average of 16.4% (United Nations 2015: 46).



‘The essence of the problem of women’s social and economic marginalization in transitional society is that free market ideology perfectly corresponds with the patriarchal gender ideology construction of women as marginal and the conviction that this socioeconomic marginality is due to a ‘natural’ division of labour between the sexes.’ (Zhurzhenko 2001)



Consistently the biggest problem facing men, and particularly men occupying the lower echelons of the labour market, has been the near-impossibility of meeting expectations of them as providers in what continues to be a low-wage economy characterised by widespread income insecurity (Walker 2019)



Toxic gender culture or toxic economy?

- ‘It was really difficult to buy a flat, I’ve been living in Kiev for 11 years and we only just bought a flat. It’s small but it’s ours. Until recently, I had a period of two years when I worked without a day off, for two whole years. I’ve got this as my main job and I worked weekend days as a chef... Also on holiday days... Of course, it’s difficult because we’ve got a baby, my wife’s on maternity leave, so as a man [kak muzhik] I have to look after everything, I have to keep everything together. I’ve done security work too, one-off jobs, whenever I can, I don’t turn anything down’. (Egor, 37, despatch manager, clothing factory, Kiev)
- ‘when a person gets used to eating, they develop a strong appetite right?’ (Valera, 28, UAZ machine operator, Ul’yanovsk)
- ‘It’s shameful, the fact that I have to share a flat with my brother... I want to have a wife, children... my brother’s family left... I mean, why are we working? What are we working for? (Oleg, 40, machine operator, Moscow)

Recommendations: directions for projects and investments

- Continue to help to formalise the economy by tackling corruption, thereby stemming the growth of gender inequality resulting from the abuse of patriarchal power.
- Correct market failures in access to gender-sensitive personal financial services,
 - so that clients can access loans, mortgages and pensions without resorting to men working excessive hours and women facing a 'second shift' of care work in the home.
- Invest strategically to minimise key constraints to gender equality.
 - For example, as childcare is a common obstacle for women in business, be proactive in supporting gender-equitable crèche businesses.
- Build on the good practices of companies focusing on community development to positively engage men alongside women and children.
- Integrate issues of men, masculinity and gender relations along the value chains of investments,
 - through engagement with key personnel in HR management and training, and
 - through business advice and training targeting female entrepreneurs.

Recommendations: directions for men-focused NGOs

- There are several entry points to engage men as agents of positive change in gender relations, most notably in relation to work–life balance and men’s health.
- Campaigns can highlight the health risks of gender stereotypes, which tie masculinity to over-work and the main breadwinner identity.
- Greater efforts are also needed to increase men’s involvement in care, their knowledge of healthy lifestyle choices, and uptake of health services.

