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**Deconstructing Cardboard Man:
Antagonists, Allies and Advocates in the Quest
for Women's Economic Empowerment in
Bangladesh**

**A thesis presented to the Department of Food Business and
Development,
National University of Ireland, Cork,
In fulfilment of the requirements for the
Degree of Ph.D**

By

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January 2021

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BC	Before Christ
BNP	Bangladesh National Party
BPC	Bangladesh Planning Commission
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
CARE	Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
CNN	Cable News Network
CPD	Centre for Policy Dialogue
CPJ	Committee to Protect Journalists
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DGA Marker	Disability, Gender and Age Marker
EDBM	Enterprise Development and Business Management
e.g.	<i>exempli gratia</i> (for example)
EGPP	Employment Generation Program for the Poorest
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
EIU	Economist Intelligence Unit Index (EIU)
ELDS	Early Learning Development Standards
EPI	Environmental Performance Index
EPZ	Export Processing Zone
EU	European Union
EUR	Euro (European Monetary Unit)
EWL	European Women's Lobby
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FESP	Female Secondary Education Stipend Programme
FG	Focus Group
FTSE	Financial Times and the London Stock Exchange
GASE	Gender and Society Equity
GCC	Grand Challenges Canada
GDP	Gross Domestic Product

GGGI	Global Gender Gap Index
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
GPA	Grade Point Average
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HO	Head Office
ICA	International Cooperative Alliance
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
i.e.	<i>id est</i> (that is)
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
IT	Information Technologies
K-pop	Korean Pop Music
LGBTQI	Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgendered and Queer Identities
LSP	Local Service Provider
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MEF	Men's Empowerment Framework
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MID	Men in Development
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoPME	Ministry of Primary and Mass Education
MSD	Market System Development
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
N/A	Not Applicable
NNGO	National Non-Governmental Organisation
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
Oxfam GB	Oxford Committee for Famine Relief, Great Britain
Post-9/11	The time after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States

Promundo-US	Promundo-United States
RDS	Rural Development Scheme
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-based Violence
sq.	Square
TBC	To Be Confirmed
ToC	Theory of Change
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training Programme
UCC	University College Cork
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
UN	United Nations
UNDAW	United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
US	United States of America
USD	United States Dollar
v	Value
VAW	Violence against Women and Girls
WEE	Women's Economic Empowerment
WEF	World Economic Forum
Vision 21	National Sustainable Development Strategy (2010 – 2021)
WITS	World Integrated Trade Solution
Q	Question
Q-squared	Combining Quantitative and Qualitative
Q&A	Questions and Answers
7/7	Bombings on July 7, 2005 in London

Declaration

This is to certify that the work I am submitting is my own and has not been submitted for another degree, either at University College Cork or elsewhere. All external references and sources are clearly acknowledged and identified within the contents. I have read and understood the regulations of University College Cork concerning plagiarism.

Signature: Marcela Ondekova

Date: 7 January 2021

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Abstract

This study explores Muslim masculinities in Bangladesh and their positioning towards women's economic empowerment (WEE), with a particular focus on employment in low-income communities. The research is framed by a specific context of increasing women's labour participation – a shared objective of the current Government of Bangladesh and the local and international development community.

The study introduces a masculinity continuum containing three masculinity markers – Antagonists, Allies and Advocates – to facilitate the exploration and understanding of differences in men's views, attitudes and practices with respect to WEE. Mixed methods, including focus groups, peer-to-peer survey, life-history narrations, gender analysis, interviews, Delphi method and observation, were used to analyse the linkages between WEE and masculinities in the selected context.

The study found that WEE was a multidimensional phenomenon in low-income communities. However, Antagonist and Ally men overlooked psychological and social benefits of economic inclusion for women. In addition, the indigenous perceptions of WEE, particularly by men, mainly focused on the fulfilment of practical needs and overlooked structural inequalities that perpetuate women's inequalities. Low-income women largely desired progressive masculinities embodied by Advocate men that could facilitate WEE.

While resisting changes undermining men's patriarchal control over women, Antagonist and Ally men supported women's access to decent employment under certain conditions. In addition, although Ally men, who appeared to represent the majority of men, were reluctant to give up their patriarchal privilege in the privacy of their household, they supported women's increased roles in public domains. Advocate men demonstrated some residual patriarchal attitudes and practices, but these were marginal in their masculinities. Moreover, working on women's equality with men was a source of optimism and joy for Advocates.

Lack of women's safety was amongst the main obstacles highlighted to restrict women's mobility and access to employment outside their communities, although in the discourse by Antagonist and Ally men, women's increased mobility and new opportunities were strongly correlated with their fear of a working independent woman. This fueled the attempts to retraditionalise women, who had accessed new roles in society.

Antagonist and, to some extent, Ally men demonstrated a high prevalence of gender stereotypes about women's and men's roles based on biological essentialism and conservative cultural/Islamic norms. This included primary breadwinner as a persistent mainstream masculinity norm. On the other hand, Advocates, and to some extent Ally men, were engaged in more emotionally rewarding relationships with their wives and children, than men with Antagonist masculinities. Husbands and fathers with Advocate masculinities demonstrated a higher involvement in household and care work, rewarded by their spouses.

The Islamic faith was not found to be a conclusive factor in driving or resisting patriarchal masculinities, although less religious men appeared more progressive with respect to WEE. Disability was linked with heightened emasculation caused by the erosion of the male primary breadwinner role, but this appeared to be the case only when other salient factors were at play. An emasculated disabled husband was a factor in a higher risk of violence against low-income women working outside their communities.

Whereas Antagonists appeared to constitute a substantial part of society, the dominance of Ally masculinities creates a unique opportunity to engage with men on transformative WEE. The research contributes to the formulation of a men's empowerment framework, which can assist development actors in increasing men's support to women's equal economic rights in Bangladesh and potentially elsewhere. The current Government policies, which are largely supportive of women's economic inclusion, contribute to an enabling environment for such efforts.

Two specific approaches can support mobilisation of Antagonist and Ally men: marital togetherness and the concept of peaceful household (hooks, 1984, 1998; Ahmed, 2008, 2014) and the egalitarian gender relations within Islam (Kabasacal Arat and Hasan, 2017; Musawah, 2018; Nazneen, 2018), supported by partnerships with those religious authorities that share common interests with development actors, such as fighting violence against women and girls.

Ultimately, the study challenges the narrative of oppressive Muslim men, who resist normalisation of Bangladeshi women in the economy. It validates the existence of diversity of masculinities and their embodiments in studied practice, while including men in women's struggle for equality and social progress. The study concludes that non-static and nuanced understanding of masculinities can encourage useful empowerment strategies in development practice that can result in the improvement of lives of many women and men.

Chapter 1 Introduction to the Study

1.1 Context and rationale for conducting the study

The pursuit of women's equality with men has been part of the global development agenda for at least five decades, although the actual academic and popular interest in the subject has had a much longer history. Nonetheless, at the start of the 21st Century, humankind is still far from considering women and men as equals, including in the most developed countries of the world. The post-Millennium Development Goals' debate recognised social transformation in many parts of the world as being much slower than originally envisioned by the creators of the global Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Many approaches employed in the MDGs to trigger positive impacts on women's rights had been short-sighted and inefficient in disrupting complex and deeply entrenched inequalities between women and men. The new global development agenda for change, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted in 2015 for the next fifteen years, offers a much broader scope for intervention and a stronger potential to make considerable progress towards equality of women and men, and, potentially, other gender identities.

Yet, despite years of awareness raising, training and advocacy on including 'gender' in development (and humanitarian) programming as one of the key cross-cutting themes, much of the urgent work required to make visible progress on equality of women and men is still unclear or overlooked. One of the blurred, if not contested, areas is the position of men with respect to 'gender' and 'achieving' gender equality as a development objective. On one side of the spectrum, gender narratives continue to frame gender equality as a women's issue, whereas on the other, 'gender' emerges in a perverse rationale of defending men's 'rights' due to supposed emasculation of men as a side-effect of women's advancement.

Further, still too many development approaches disregard multifaceted contestations of the concepts of gender equality, including, but not limited to, its static understanding ('achieving' gender equality instead continuously working towards it), and limited attention to the rights of people with non-binary gender identities, gender intersectionality, and the discursive nature of development policies. With respect to intersectionality, according to Kabeer (2015, p.202), "gender inequality is...pervasive across diverse groups within societies, cutting across class, race, caste, ethnicity, and other forms of inequality. It is not simply one more horizontal inequality to be added to the others. Rather, it intersects with these other inequalities in ways that intensify the disadvantages associated with other forms of inequality".

One useful way to explore the relations between men and gender equality is offered by masculinity theories that emerged in the early 1990s, particularly prompted by the notion of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1985) and its relations to other critical concepts, such as power, patriarchy, agency and so on. Based on these theoretical explorations, “it is not men per se, but certain ways of being and behaving as man” that associate men with dominance and power (Cornwall, 1997, p.11). Moreover, not all men behave in a certain way all the time; some attributes associated with masculinity can be traced in women’s behaviour as well, and not all men have power over women (Cornwall, 1997, p.11), certainly not in the equal degree as suggested by the study title¹.

According to Cornwall (1997, p.10), the way in which the influence of earlier feminist theories led the omission of men in proposed pathways towards the goal of women’s equality with men within global development strategies, was a major drawback:

“Old-style feminist theory dealt with them at one stroke: men were classed as the problem, those who stood in the way of positive change. And while feminist activism stressed change in attitudes and behaviour on the part of women in coming forward to claim their rights, it offered little more to men than a series of negative images of masculinity.”

Yet, despite the proliferation of theoretical inquiries into the subject of men, gender and development in recent decades, and a better formulation of men’s issues within the discourse on development, development practice continues to overlook the usefulness of masculinities in pursuing gender equality, including within women’s economic empowerment (WEE) strategies, at least from the author’s vantage point as a development practitioner. This was one of the reasons that inspired the formulation of this research subject to demonstrate that understanding the complexities of masculinities can improve responsiveness of development strategies to multiple goals associated with promoting gender equality, including WEE.

To study masculinities, the research selected a specific context of low-income Muslim communities in Bangladesh for a number of reasons, including ongoing efforts to increase women’s labour participation in the country – a shared objective of the current Government of Bangladesh and the local and international development community.

¹ The expression of a cardboard man is adapted from Lewin (2010) referring to cardboard women suggesting a superficial analysis without depth and nuance.

1.2 Analytical framework

From the theoretical point of view, the study is framed by critical men's studies, theoretical explorations of women's labour and feminist economics, and their relations to development practice that supports sustainable and inclusive economic models. The ambit of inclusive economic rights incorporates the discourse on economic models that integrate decent employment, cooperative economy, sustainable models of growth, and humane economics that prioritises interests of people, not markets. Within these approaches to economic development, gender equality² is not an afterthought but an integral goal that is pursued within public strategies and institutions that do not disregard its critical role within the social fabric of the country.

The study argues against static, reductive and regressive representations of men, hence the reference to 'cardboard man' in the study title, and the methodological approach of exploring multiple masculinities. However, the aim of the research is not only to deconstruct masculinities in contemporary Bangladesh. The analysis of men's views, attitudes and practices within a variety of roles men fulfil contributes to the formulation of a *men's empowerment framework* which can assist development planners and practitioners in increasing men's support to women's equal economic rights in Bangladesh and potentially elsewhere. The study argues that men, too, must be empowered to be able to support building a gender³ just society.

The research employs feminist perspectives on conducting sociological research, specifically, a feminist analysis of development strategies that aim to enhance gender equality as part of broader inclusive social transformation (Doucet and Mauthner, 2006; Harding, 2013). Such transformative development does not only bring affirmative changes to the lives of women and girls but encompass progressive changes in the lives of men and boys as well.

Masculinities are further explored through localised and historicised operations of private and public patriarchy (Pease, 2014) examined within the spectrum of masculinities that reject women as economic actors in society and economic providers for their households on one side of the spectrum, and masculinities supportive of the feminist project of gender equality and WEE on the other. The study attempts to synthesize what constitutes resistant and supportive

² Inclusive of other genders beyond female and male identities.

³ Although, this may be presently limited to female and male identities.

masculinities in their positioning towards women's economic empowerment, particularly with respect to low-income women.

'Turning a gaze' on men does not disregard women's agency in the struggle against women's inequality with men but highlights the necessity to include men in that struggle – the advocacy of which is made explicit throughout the study. This rationale stems from one of the goals of the feminist project, understood as "liberating men from the self-assumed status of generic human beings"; instead, it perceives men as gendered entities (Poudyal, 2000, p.77), complex and often conflicting. In that vein, the study subscribes to the humane approach to conducting feminist social research, which sees men as real human beings grappling with their own imperfections (Kouritzin, 2000, p.17).

At this juncture, it is critical to note that there is not one common perspective, neither on feminist epistemology or feminist standpoints (Doucet and Mauthner, 2006). Furthermore, feminist methodologies do not expect to 'find' objective reality. They acknowledge that reality is 'messy' and complicated, and in order to understand it, we must engage with it on political as well as intellectual and personal levels (Cornwall, 2016). Nonetheless, the study maintains the explicit focus on social justice for all as the core of development research from a feminist perspective (Jackson, 2006).

The research is located in a particular context where Islamic institutions and a specific interpretation of Islamic jurisprudence and practice play significant roles. It is, however, crucial to underscore that, in this research, religion is considered one of several critical aspects explored in the overall analysis of masculinity positioning towards WEE. At the same time, the research rejects reductive representations of Muslim men as being inherently against women's equality with men based on the argument that this is mandated in the Islamic doctrine.

First, it has been well established that gender-based discrimination, both direct and indirect, cuts across religious beliefs and cultures (Kandiyoti, 1988; Klingorová and Havlíček, 2015; Fisher and Naidoo, 2016). Second, the Islamic doctrine has been the subject of enduring discussions by a wide variety of actors questioning the validity of the static interpretation of Islamic norms. This research distinguishes two main strands of these debates – one that is largely correlated with egalitarian relations between women and men (albeit with some possible limitations) and another that hinders women's equality with men. In the analytical framework of this research, egalitarian interpretations of the Islamic doctrine are correlated with progressive masculinities contributing to gender justice.

Additionally, the research unfolds with the explicit understanding of gender norms and gender-related attitudes and practices as highly contextual and discursive constructs, resulting in non-static performative masculinities and their embodiments (i.e. doing, not being, a man). Such contextualisation further challenges the perception of Muslim men as a homogeneous and static category by giving recognition to a diversity of influences in the construction of Muslim masculinities in a Muslim-dominated society, that is beyond strictly religious sources. Ouzgane (2006, p.6) explains:

“...the Muslim world is diverse and ever-changing. We...need to take into consideration local realities, religious and political agendas, the consequences of Western colonialism and imperialism, and the market effects of globalization...[T]his attention to and recognition of the diversity of masculinities must not divert our attention from men’s social dominance both in the Muslim world and everywhere else”.

Crucially, patriarchy is experienced by individual men and women, however, it is essential not to lose sight of institutional embodiments of patriarchy, and structures and practices that maintain it (Poudyal, 2000, p.77); hence the focus on both individual and structural operations of patriarchal gender order in the research (Pease, 2014).

In addition, while acknowledging the existence of gay masculinities, and heterosexual men’s social positioning towards these masculinities, for pragmatic and ethical reasons, most particularly the criminalisation of homosexuality in Bangladesh, these were not included in the study. For that reason, in the heteronormative contexts, the study replaces the term gender equality with women’s equality with men or similar formulations, as these better capture described reality. The concept of gender equality is still used where the study deliberately refers to the inclusive meaning of the concept of gender.

Finally, the outline of the analytical framework for the research consciously drew on a wide variety of research from South Asia, and specifically on studies from Bangladesh, to counterbalance hegemony of the Western scholarship in social research. However, the study is informed by global (universal) human rights frameworks, such as the Sustainable Development Goals. From the policy and political perspective, the study is located within a specific context of Bangladesh’s development policy, the Vision 2021, and other national strategies on poverty reduction and building an inclusive society in Bangladesh, promoted by the current Government of Bangladesh.

1.3 Masculinity continuum and masculinity markers

The study introduces three main masculinity markers encapsulated within a masculinity continuum, which facilitate the exploration of linkages between the concept of women's economic empowerment and masculinities: Antagonists, Allies and Advocates. The markers are borrowed from Jackson (2015) for their conceptual clarity to distinguish three broad categories of social positioning. Unlike Jackson, who applies these markers to discuss white privilege within feminism, in this research, the markers are constructed as pointers on men's prevalent attitudes, behaviours, practices, and adherence to certain gender norms with respect to masculinity and WEE. The reference to a masculinity continuum denotes fluidity of these three unstable categories located within a broader spectrum of masculinities.

The definition of the markers presented in this section was developed before data collection and is largely based on the literature review presented in Chapters 2 and 3. In addition to Jackson (2015), the specific categorisation of Antagonist, Ally and Advocate masculinities stems from several studies discussed in detail in Chapter 3 (Ahmed, 2008, 2014; Chen and Mac an Ghaill, 2017; Hasan, Aggleton and Persson, 2018; Scarborough, Sin and Risman, 2018). Each marker was later cross-examined through field work results and the adapted understanding of each marker is presented in Section 10.2.

Antagonists are understood as men demonstrating Antagonist masculinities. They tend to oppose women's equality with men in private and public spheres, justified by cultural, religious or social stereotypical arguments about masculine and feminine roles (Mac Cormack and Strathern, 1980; Kandiyoti, 1988; Folbre, 1994; Butler, 2007). Their resistance is manifested within viewpoints, as part of structures and institutions these men identify with, and in their everyday lived experience (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Pease, 2014; Ratele, 2015). These men lean towards immature traditional masculinity (Kimmel, 1996; Butler, 2007), and can demonstrate some toxic and/or hypermasculinity traits, including homophobia (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Jewkes et al., 2015), political and/or religious fundamentalism (Ahmed, 2006) and heightened sexualised perception of the private and public spheres based on men's virility and mistrust of women (Bartky, 1988; Ahmed, 2008, 2014; Hasan, Aggleton and Persson, 2018). In Antagonists' perspectives, women should be confined to the household, their chastity and mobility controlled by their husband or another (primarily male) relative, and a relationship with male and other, usually senior, relatives (male and female) should be based on obedience (Kandiyoti, 1988; Karim, 2011; Kamruzzaman, 2015; Hughes, 2017; Musawah,

2018). Such men exercise control over women's bodies and physical and/or psychological violence can be employed to maintain domination over women (Anwary, 2015). Positive emotional connections of care and love between husband and wife are crippled (Ahmed, 2008, 2014). Women's engagement in economic activities, especially outside of the household, is discouraged or opposed, while women's control over productive resources is also limited (Ambrus, Field and Torero, 2010; Asadullah and Wahhaj, 2016; Kabeer, Mahmud and Tasneem, 2017). Adherence to the notion of men's superiority over women in both private and public life includes men's avoidance of household and care tasks (Budlender, 2008; Barker and Pawlak, 2011; Musawah, 2018). Antagonist Muslim men perceive themselves as women's guardians, this belief being grounded in protectionist Islamic interpretations of relationships between men and women (Maître, 2017; Musawah, 2018; Nazneen, 2018).

Allies are men demonstrating Ally masculinities. They are aware of various barriers and challenges women face individually and as a social category and may speak of solidarity with women (hooks, 1984; Holter, 2003; Pease, 2014; Jewkes et al., 2015). They may oppose violence against women, severe restrictions on women's mobility and exclusion of women from asset ownership (Agarwal, 1994; Ahmed, 2008, 2014). However, in their views, man is the primary breadwinner; and while women may engage in some economic activities, these should not interfere with women's reproductive responsibilities along the lines of gender stereotypical division of labour (Kabeer, Mahmud and Tasneem, 2017; Hasan, Aggleton and Persson, 2018). Ally men tend to lean towards a liberal understanding of societal gender regime but might not be aware of their own patriarchal privilege (Connell, 2005; Pease, 2006, 2014; Hasan, Aggleton and Persson, 2018), and as such may miss opportunities to help women overcome obstacles in increasing their economic freedoms. Their complicit masculinity contributes to the maintenance of patriarchal gender order at household and societal levels (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Unlike Antagonist men, however, husbands in the Allies category can demonstrate care and love for their spouse and children (Ahmed, 2008, 2014). Their hybrid masculinity creates space for becoming a listening audience on the issues of women's equality with men, potentially leading to practical transformative actions (Connell, 2005; Farré, 2011; Pease, 2014; Jewkes et al., 2015).

Advocates are men demonstrating Advocate masculinities. They are acutely aware of inequalities experienced by women and negative impacts on women's and men's private lives as well as society at large (hooks, 1998; Flood, 2005; 2015; Pease, 2014; Jewkes et al., 2015).

Their viewpoints are less grounded in religious norms; even if they are, these men tend to adhere to the egalitarian understanding of Islamic/Muslim masculinities (Kabasakal Arat and Hasan, 2017; Musawah, 2018; Nazneen, 2018). They actively oppose women's economic and social exclusion by taking action if demonstrations of gender injustice are encountered (Kimmel, 1996; Flood, 2005; 2007; Ahmed, 2008, 2014; Pease, 2014; UN Women, 2018). Fathers have a keen interest in daughters' wellbeing and share household work with their wives (Johansson, 2011; Hanlon, 2012). They hold egalitarian views on women's capabilities and show trust and affection towards women (hooks, 1998; Ahmed, 2008, 2014). These men strive for democratic manhood and position themselves as women's partners in working towards gender equality (Kimmel, 1996; hooks, 1998; Flood, 2005; 2007; Pease, 2014; Almassi, 2015). Their liberal stance on gender relations may include openness with respect to same-sex relationships (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Jewkes et al., 2015; Hossain, 2017). These men aspire towards the consolidation of positive hegemonic masculinity as the societal (non-static) mainstream masculinity norm (Pease, 2014).

1.4 Research questions

The research is interested in a broader question of enhancing the enabling environment supporting women as economic actors in Bangladesh with a particular focus on exploring roles men, in their different capacities, can and would play in facilitating transformative women's economic empowerment. Transformative analyses of women's economic empowerment are conducted with the aim to challenge those unequal power relations that keep women (as individuals and as a social category) in subordinate positions to men, and to contribute to sustainable social transformation based on egalitarian relations between women and men (as well as amongst men and amongst women).

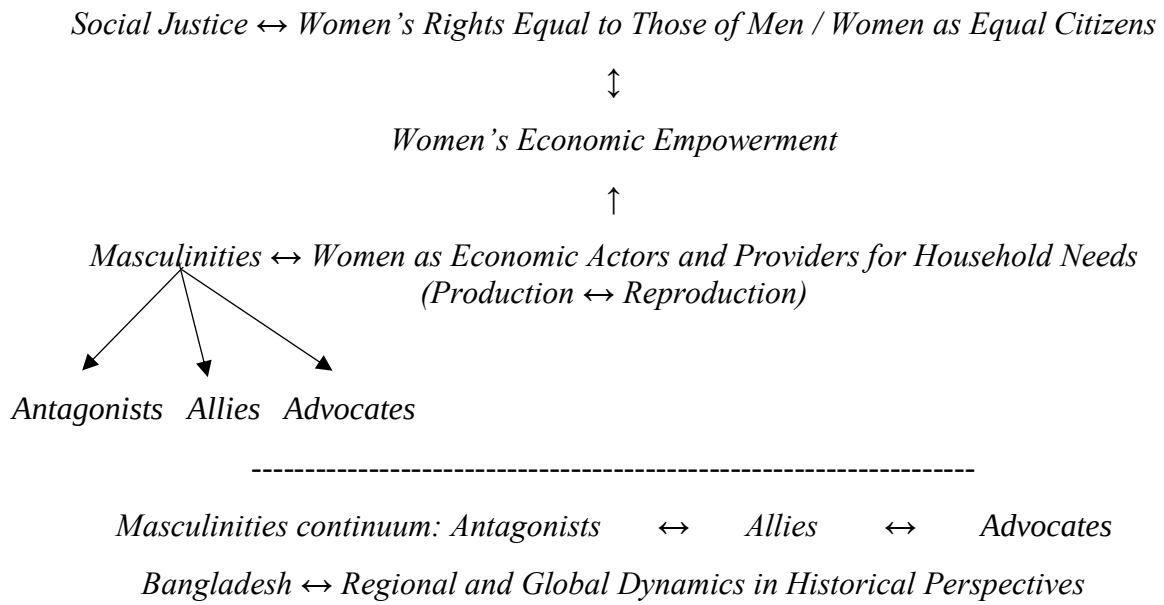
The central focus of the research is to conduct a nuanced analysis of Muslim masculinities in and their positioning towards women's economic empowerment in the development context of Bangladesh. The ultimate goal of this research is, however, to demonstrate that such nuanced analyses of masculinities can improve effectiveness of development policy and practice on women's economic empowerment.

Therefore, guided by the conceptual and methodological frameworks of this research, the study answers the following central research question: *How do Antagonist, Ally and Advocate masculinities position towards women's economic empowerment (WEE) in the context of Bangladesh and what can be learned from these positionings to inform development praxis on WEE?*

The research of masculinity positionings towards WEE is facilitated by the following sub-questions:

- 1) What critical aspects of WEE and idealised masculinities facilitating WEE can be identified in indigenous discourses in low-income contexts?
- 2) What gender norms, attitudes and practices related to WEE can be identified in the discourse by Muslim men that drive or hinder men's progressiveness on WEE?
- 3) What are the policy implications for development praxis on WEE originating from the exploration of Antagonist, Ally and Advocate masculinities?

Figure 1.1: Schematic representation of the research framework



1.5 Overview of the methodology

The study employs a mixed method of quantitative and qualitative data production to allow data triangulation with the conscious partiality towards qualitative data “to explore personal and social experiences, meanings and practices as well as the role of context in shaping these” (Skovdal and Cornish, 2015, p.4). According to Jackson (2006, p.525), “socially engaged research is not ‘biased’, but stronger than research with narrower ideas of objectivity; ...reflexivities and subjectivities are crucial to the conduct of research”. Conscious partiality, adopted by the author for this study, is a process by which knowledge is constructed, both within the context in which the experience takes place, and also by the interaction of the researcher within that context (Varga-Dobai, 2012). Self-reflexivity and auto-ethnographic approaches are critical for socially-conscious feminist inquiries (Chambers, 2017).

Six research instruments were developed applying several methods: focus groups, peer-to-peer survey, life-history narrations, gender analysis, interviews, Delphi method and observation. The methodological approach adopted for the study falls into the ambit of Complexity Paradigms, which are more suitable for social research (Chambers, 2017, p.92). With respect to the specific instruments, Instruments 1 (Indigenous Understanding of Women’s Economic Empowerment) and 2 (Visualisation of Ideal Manhood) laid the foundation for exploring the indigenous understanding of WEE and contemporary manhood. Instruments 3 (Prevalence of Men’s Attitudes on WEE) and 4 (Construction of Manhood with Respect to WEE) provided an opportunity for an in-depth analysis of the linkages between WEE and masculinities. Instrument 5 (Men’s Interpretations of WEE Strategies) examined men’s perspectives on approaches to promoting WEE in three non-governmental organisations and gender equality more broadly. Instrument 6 (Feedback on a Men’s Empowerment Framework) supported the outline of the men’s empowerment framework by seeking comments from development practitioners on the proposed outline.

The research benefited from the co-operation of several non-governmental organisations in Bangladesh, particularly in facilitating access to respondents and research sites. Some of these organisations either exclusively focus on, or integrate, disabilities in their organisational programmes. Therefore, the research sample included some respondents with disabilities. This was deemed relevant as disabilities are increasingly mainstreamed in development policy and practice as one of the cross-cutting themes. Thus, while it is acknowledged that disabilities are not comprehensively mainstreamed in this research, disabilities are, to some extent, incorporated in the analysis of the results.

1.6 Layout of the study

Following the logic of the research process, Chapter 2 first presents the contextual background to this study. It provides a synthesis of a historical context leading to the formation of the present-day Bangladesh, followed by an outline of the main discourses on women's rights, women's political participation, and recent progress in socio-economic development. This brief presentation of key contextual aspects incorporates some references to normative frameworks, including national legislation and international human rights instruments as well as local cultural norms and practices. The purpose of Chapter 2 is to locate the study within a specific context and to contextualise the study of masculinities in Bangladesh.

Chapter 3 presents the analytical framework of the study. It first discusses recent theoretical explorations of key concepts relevant for this study: women's economic empowerment, women's labour and masculinities. These key conceptual blocks of the research are complemented by an overview of relevant studies related to understanding Islamic and Muslim masculinities with the focus on Bangladesh. A specific section discusses main challenges related to the current landscape of development practice with reference to women's economic empowerment.

Chapter 4 discusses methodological approaches adopted for this study. The chapter starts with the overview of the multi-level analysis approach, which also considers units of analysis applied in each research instruments. It continues with outlining how the geographical locations of primary data collection were selected, followed by the rationale for identifying respondents for each instrument. The methodology of each research instrument is presented thereafter, followed by the considerations of constraints and limitations of the research process and how these were overcome. This section also includes ethical considerations in relation to potential biases and quality control measures for the data collection and the analysis. Chapter 4 concludes with a brief note on the author's positionality.

Chapters 5-9 provide a synthesis of the results obtained through Instruments 1-5 and their detailed analysis by applying the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 3. Each chapter includes a concluding section with key findings from the analysis. Chapter 5 focuses on indigenous discourse on WEE compared with the leading theories on WEE, women's labour and masculinities presented in Chapter 3. Chapter 6 discusses indigenous perspectives on ideal manhood obtained through focus groups with low-income women. Chapter 7 considers the results of the peer-to-peer survey on men's attitudes to WEE. Chapter 8 focuses on masculinity

construction with respect to WEE analysed through the life history method. Chapter 9 discusses the findings from the analysis of men's interpretations of WEE strategies and men's views on egalitarian gender relations in Bangladesh. Chapters 5-6 respond to the first research sub-question, Chapters 7-8 to the second sub-question and Chapter 9 contributes towards the third sub-question concerned with policy recommendations on masculinity-informed WEE.

Chapter 10 concludes the study. It first revisits the masculinity continuum adopted for this research and presents the revised definitions of the masculinity markers based on the results from Chapters 5-9. It then summarises key conclusions and the contribution of the study for advancing theoretical knowledge on WEE and masculinities and how these are relevant for policy and practice. The final section of Chapter 10 discussed future research on this subject. The guidance on the application of the proposed men's empowerment framework, resulting from this research, is presented in Annex 1.

Chapter 2 Background to and Context of the Study

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the context framing the study of masculinities and their relations to women's economic empowerment in Bangladesh. It starts with Section 2.2 presenting a short overview of the formation of Bangladesh as an independent country, followed by Section 2.3 on the evolution of discourses on women's equal rights and women's political representation. Section 2.4 complements this discussion by presenting the context of recent socio-economic developments focusing on women's economic inclusion, educational attainments and environmental challenges affecting low-income women. This short synthesis indicates that Bangladesh is a locus of many contradictions and counter-discourses, which challenge homogeneous representations of the country.

Bangladesh, as the location of the study, was selected for a number of reasons. First, it is a Muslim majority country and understood as part of the so-called patriarchal belt (Caldwell, 1978). However, the country has adopted a relatively liberal legislative framework contributing to the progress in equality between women and men. At the same time a rather strong patriarchal gender regime is still deeply entrenched in the society, particularly in rural areas (Kabeer, Huq and Mahmud, 2014; Anwary, 2015; Kamruzzaman, 2015; Asadullah and Wahhaj, 2016; Khan et al., 2017). Female employment has been on increase, especially in the country's flagship ready-made garments industry, which has acted as a pull factor for thousands of women to seek formal employment outside their homes.

Furthermore, decades-long investment in poverty reduction strategies has contributed to the progress across some Millennium Development Goals, especially in education (Akanda, 2015). The country is also home to various social initiatives, recognised beyond its borders, particularly the Grameen Bank in the field of microfinance. On the other hand, these initiatives have also sparked a global debate on their effectiveness to reduce poverty, still persistently high in Bangladesh, and how successful they have been in increasing women's equality with men (Kabeer, Mahmud and Tasneem, 2017; Maïtrot, 2017; Sen and Ali, 2017).

Finally, Bangladesh has a diverse civil society, including a nation-wide women's movement with a long history of advocating for women's rights. Thanks to the penetration of mobile technologies, the use of new social media is expanding and becoming a vital channel for broad-

based information exchange, particularly amongst, presumably, more progressive youth (Sakil, 2018). The continued resistance of some conservative forces in the country, however, is never too far away, as demonstrated in the violence inflicted upon human rights activists (Siddiqi, 2019; Fair and Patel, 2020). In this context, the progress towards women's empowerment in Bangladesh is a challenging endeavour.

2.2 Formation of Bangladesh state

Bangladesh is situated in the Bengal Delta of South Asia (see Figure 2.1). The country was founded in 1971 under the official name of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Although Bangladesh may be perceived as a linguistically and religiously homogenous country, historically, the delta has always been a region with multiple religious and ethnic identities, contributing to the contemporary multi-layered structure and the specific socio-cultural character of modern Bangladesh (Van Schendel, 2009, p.32). The now dominant monotheistic religion – Islam – was preceded by worshipping multiple male and female deities by earlier settlers (Van Schendel, 2009, p.26). Even in later centuries, religious practices, today referred to as Buddhism, Jainism, Hinduism and later Christianity, coexisted in the delta. The early literary tradition also features many strong female heroines, such as Behula, a female character in the Shiva Purana epic. Islam was introduced into this diverse cultural milieu and slowly spread since the 8th Century as a by-product of interacting with Persian and Arab maritime traders and other travellers.

The successive dynasties of Turkic and Afghani origin established the Sultanate (1206-1526) in the Delta region with the centre in Delhi during most of the period. The Mamluk dynasty, briefly installed the only female ruler of the Sultanate, Razia Sultana (1236-1240), now referred to as one of the symbols of women's rights movements in South Asia (Srivastava, 2003). After a period of resistance in the delta, the territory, that today constitutes Bangladesh, came under the rule of the Mughals in 1612, except for the Chittagong area in the southeast, held by the Portuguese and the Arakanese, and the Chittagong Hills governed by independent chiefdoms. The Mughals relied on semi-autonomous officials, *zamindars* wielding extensive political and military power (Bhattacharyya, 1978; Uddin, 2006, p. 61; Van Schendel, 2009, p.64). Zamindars in the delta were predominately Hindu, while most of the peasants were Muslims (Van Schnedel, 2009, p.83).

One of the most acclaimed translations of the Qur'an, accessible to the Bengali population at the time, was completed by a non-Muslim, Girish Chandra Sen (1835-1910). Among his other pursuits, Sen edited a magazine for women called *Mahila* (Uddin, 2006, p.88). Another influential writer of the period was Muhammad Akram Khan (1868-1968), a Muslim modernist, who argued for better respect of women's rights in Islam, which had been ignored by the reformists and other Islamic leaders before them (Uddin, 2006, p.109). Among non-religious writers, Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain (1880-1932), considered a founder of the South

Asian women's movement, was known for publicly advocating women's rights and ran schools for girls (Hossain, 1992; Bagchi, 2010). In 1905, she published a radical feminist work, *Sultana's Dream*, in which reverse *purdah* confined men indoors, and women took over the public sphere, ending a war non-violently and restoring health and beauty to the world (Chakrabarty, 2014).

Following the consolidation of power by the British in Bengal in 1757, a growing number of Christian missionaries actively worked to convert the local population to Christianity. As pointed out by Uddin (2006, p.49), British policies conflated the spread of Christianity with a modernising colonial project. This new approach was influenced by economic ambitions of the British East India Company, expecting the modernised British Indian subjects⁴ to become new customers of British goods (Uddin, 2006, p.49). The boycotting of British products later became one of the tactics in the struggle against the colonisers. The British introduced a number of new technological innovations in the Bengal, such as railways, steam ships, radio, telegraph and telephone. According to Sarkar (2010), these tools of empire consolidated political and economic control over the region. In addition, initial limited interest in the English language in the Bengal had gradually changed for practical reasons to participate in 'modern' lifestyles introduced by the empire (Jenkins, 2014, p.48).

Despite the relevance of other salient markers such as caste, ethnicity and gender, British administrators also increasingly employed two overarching categories – Hindu and Muhammadan – and gave rise to the corresponding dichotomy of majority and minority in the British India (Uddin, 2006, p. 66). Although this division had never been so straightforward in the Bengal, religion became a primary mark of identity cutting across classes and castes contributing to increasing rivalry for political power (Jones, 2006; Gilmartin, 2015). The early 20th Century brought new violent tactics of opposition against the British – political assassination, first used by revolutionary youth against high ranking officials, inspired by the Russian, Italian and Irish secret societies (Van Schendel, 2009, p.80). Its success was not only in causing widespread fear but also securing high publicity. These young revolutionaries included a number of women, amongst them, Pritilata Waddadar (1911-1932), a young woman from Chattogram. Women revolutionaries undertook physical and moral training alongside

⁴ Including the present-day Bangladesh as well.

men, learned to swim, ride bicycles, row boats and drive cars as a way to prepare themselves for underground work (Ghosh, 2013).

Following the British withdrawal from South Asia, the 1947 Partition saw the creation of two independent states – India (state for Hindus) and Pakistan (state for Muslims, including Muslims from the Bengal Delta), although a United Bengal for both Hindus and Muslims was originally supported by the region's leading politicians, notably Gandhi and Jinnah (Van Schendel, 2009, p.94). The new international borders cut across trade roots, communities and generations-long social arrangements in the Bengal triggering territorial disagreements among India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and also Myanmar (Hill and Motwani, 2017; Ashraf, 2018a; Ranjan, 2018; Martin, Margesson and Vaughn, 2019). The national unity in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan was complicated not only by geography and the distance between western and eastern parts (with new international borders in between), but also distinct ethnic cultures in West Pakistan and East Pakistan (approximately the territory of the present Bangladesh). Despite the majority of the population residing in the East, Urdu, spoken in West Pakistan (the current state of Pakistan) was selected as the national language, a move widely opposed by East Pakistan (Van Schendel, 2009, p.109). There was a wide-spread perception in West Pakistan that Bengalis were culturally and socially inferior, especially due to the religious practices they followed (Van Schendel, 2009, p.111; Uddin, 2006, p.75).

The repression of the Bengali identity prompted various responses in East Pakistan. The magazine *Begum*, established in 1947 by Mohammad Nasiruddin, was a pioneering channel for advocacy for women's rights in the Bengali language. Furthermore, thousands of girls and boys from local schools and colleges engaged in street protests, most notably on 21 February, declared as the Mother Language Day in East Pakistan (Van Schendel, 2009, p.113-114). One such young student activist, Ila Mitra (1925-2002), originally from a landowner family in Western Bengal, became a radical peasant communist leader in today's northern Bangladesh. Following her capture by the Pakistani Army, she endured extensive physical and sexual violence, which she later disclosed in her public speech denouncing army brutality.

Pakistan granted adult women a voting right in the 1956 constitution. Due to the military regime in Pakistan (1958-1971), the first general elections in the western and eastern parts of the still united Pakistan were announced in 1970. In the election year of 1970, East Pakistan was hit by enormous floods, and a few months later, by a catastrophic cyclone. According to some estimates, between 325,000 to 500,000 people lost lives, however, relief to the affected

area was slow and insufficient, causing widespread anger among the population in East Pakistan (Van Schendel, 2009, p.124). In the elections, that were finally declared to take place in December 1971, the Awami League (formerly Awami Muslim League), established in 1949, marked an unprecedented victory in East Pakistan. Seven women were also elected to the National Assembly. However, the martial law administrator, General Yahya Khan, postponed the convention of the National Assembly, leading to a brutal conflict between West and East Pakistan. The widespread violence in East Pakistan prompted a response from the international community. The war broke out amidst the ongoing antagonisms of the Cold War. Thus, the Soviet Union and India supported East Pakistan and the United States and China rallied behind West Pakistan (Van Schnedel, 2009, p.169). The entry of India with its military support to East Pakistan's freedom fighters, prompted West Pakistan's capitulation on 16 December 1971 – now celebrated as the Bangladesh Victory Day (Van Schnedel, 2009, p.172). The estimated death toll varies enormously – from 3,000,000 recorded by Bangladesh to 26,000 victims confirmed by Pakistan (Van Schnedel, 2009, p.173). According to various estimates, between 200,000 to 400,000 women in East Pakistan were tortured and raped, giving birth to thousands of 'war babies' (Saikia, 2004; Mookherjee, 2012).

A charismatic Bengali leader, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, was appointed as the first prime minister of Bangladesh – now a people's republic. The 1972 constitution was based on four principles: democracy, socialism, secularism and nationalism. The common bond of Islam was side-lined, while common cultural (and linguistic) heritage was emphasized (Uddin, 2006, 121). The new constitution also guaranteed a range of women's rights, although their interpretation had remained ambivalent (Shahid, 2013). The new country continued to struggle economically. The 1974 famine, that led to 1.5 million deaths, contributed to deepening crisis in Bangladesh (Dowlah, 2006; Van Schnedel, 2009, p.181). Initial democratic principles were soon abandoned, and the new government turned to autocratic rule, which ultimately led to the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, along with members of his family in 1975.

The political system, that has evolved in Bangladesh since 1971, is characterised by the dominance of personalised politics, with emphasis on patrimonial authority and loyalty, and the importance of informal networks of patron-client relations (Van Schendel, 2009, p.215; Basu, Devine and Wood, 2017; Ruud, 2020). The 1970s and 1980s were marred by military coups and years of autocratic rule (Huque and Hakim, 1993). Finally, in 1991, the democratic elections went ahead and the Bangladesh National Party (BNP) secured victory. The 1996 elections were won by the Awami League, which had managed to regain power under the only

surviving daughter of Mujib, Sheikh Hasina, who had strived to reform the Awami League's pro-democratic character (Ali, 1996). The BNP was founded by General Ziaur Rahman, one of the military leaders during the war for independence. During his military dictatorship (1975-1981), he amended the constitution by declaring Islam as the national religion. According to Uddin (2006, p.122), this move was symbolic, but it reassured the space for Islamist political representation in Bangladesh. After the death of Zia, his widow, Khaleda Zia had become the BNP leader and in 2001, the BNP returned to power under her leadership. Following a brief caretaker military-backed interim government (2006-2007), new general elections were carried out in December 2008, securing once again the victory of the Awami League. The Awami League remained in power since the 2014 elections (Nizam, 2011; Shanta, 2017). Despite the current civilian and secular government, the Army remains a significant player in Bangladesh, as are Islamic political movements (Shehabuddin, 2008; Jahan and Shahan, 2014; Tripathi, 2015).

The ongoing animosity between the two leading political parties and their leaders, the Awami League, led by Sheikh Hasina, and the Bangladesh National Party, led by Khaleda Zia, illustrates two very different visions of Bengali-Islamic identities (Van Schendel 2009, p.201). While the Awami League is associated with secular nationalism, Bengali cultural heritage, and humanistic aspirations (Van Schendel, 2009, p.202), embodied for example in the flagship national development strategy *Vision 2021*, the BNP's nationalism is more socially conservative, putting an emphasis on the fact that Bangladesh is predominately a Muslim country (Uddin, 2006, p.122-123; Van Schendel, 2009, p.202). The third political force, with a considerable influence over political as well as social life in Bangladesh, involves Islamic groups, represented mainly by the political party Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh. Islamists are mobilised by the vision of unified *umma* (community), irrespective of state boundaries (Uddin, 2006, p. 46; Van Schendel, 2009, p.207; Ashraf, 2018b). It is widely believed the Jamaat-e-Islami have close ties with underground fundamentalist activists who are responsible for the rise of radical Islam in Bangladesh, on the increase since the early 1990s (Van Schendel, 2009, p.207-208).

According to Uddin (2006, p.123), fundamentalists attempt to 'arabise' Bengali Islam and the local culture. These socially conservative interpretations, such as Deobandism and Saudi-Wahabi-Salafism, have made stronger inroads in Bangladesh in recent years due to expanding political, economic and social linkages with the Middle East; for instance, through increased pilgrimage to Mecca and economic migration to the Gulf States. Uddin (2006, p.9) points to

the critical nature of understanding power relations behind what is presented as religious ‘orthodoxy’, i.e. how a doctrine was articulated and by whom. In her view, this understanding is at the core of current debates on the role of political Islam in Bangladesh (Uddin, 2006, p.9).

The political, social and religious divides within the country have had violent consequences. Fundamentalists have appropriated tactics used in the struggle against the British colonial rule – public violence aiming to “instil fear and destabilise the social order” (Van Schendel, 2009, p.208). In the recent killings of progressive bloggers, for example, machetes were used to maximise the public impact of these heinous executions, and not just within Bangladesh. More than twenty journalists have been killed in Bangladesh since 1992; in the majority of cases, no one has been brought to justice (CPJ, 2020). Bomb attacks with mass casualties have been also used, such as the 2016 attack on a popular café in a Dhaka affluent neighbourhood. Well-known Bangladeshi public figures have been targeted as well, for instance, the academic and anti-poverty activist Muhammad Yunus, human rights advocate Shahriar Kabir, and writer Taslima Nasrin, who was forced to seek exile in 1994 following death threats after the publication of her works condemning misogyny in Bangladesh, in which she also targeted Islamists. These attacks indicate a continued ‘war’ against progressive social development in Bangladesh by conservative forces (Siddiqi, 2019; Fair and Patel, 2020).

Figure 2.1: Bangladesh and the Bengal Region



Source: Nations Online Project, 2020

2.3 Women's rights and political representation

2.3.1 Evolution of discourses on women's rights in Bangladesh

As discussed in the previous sections of Chapter 2, women's struggle for equality with men has a long history in the Bengal region. Azim (2011) notes that the formulation of the 'women's question' has taken place within the existing patriarchal structures affected by colonialism and nationalism in the Bengal. In the nationalist discourse, the Bengali woman was a representative ideal of the new modern nation, while the veiled Muslim woman was perceived as atavistic symbol rejecting the new nationhood (Azim, 2011, p.255). However, much of the earlier struggles for women's rights concentrated mainly on social causes, such as access to education, maternal health or poverty, and less on structural aspects of gender inequalities, such as unequal division of labour at household level and women's inequality in political representation. The patriarchal ideal of femininity as wife and mother was largely unchallenged (Azim, 2000; 2001; 2011). Azim (2000) further points out that even during the war for the independence in 1971, when large numbers of women joined the war against then Western Pakistan, women were perceived as 'auxiliary' to men's nationalist struggle, and in the discourses on the war were reduced to the images of 'dishonoured' rape victims of Pakistani soldiers.

In the years following independence, the nationalist discourse had shifted to a more universal discourse on women's human rights thanks to the emergence of the development sector prompted by the arrival of international organisations, including the United Nations agencies, to assist the new republic in the post-war crisis. These institutions encouraged adoption of the new language on women's human rights stemming from the notion of universal human rights and modernisation of 'the underdeveloped' communities. Advocacy for women's rights increased particularly during the period of the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (Panday and Li, 2014, p.730). Many prominent women's organisations were established during that period, including Narriphokho (1983), Aion-O-Salish Kendra (1986), and Bangladesh Nari Progoti Sangtha (1986).

The internationalisation of women's rights discourse in Bangladesh encouraged deeper analyses of women's priority issues, stemming particularly from Gender and Development approaches. For instance, advocacy on the elimination of violence against women (VAW) has moved away from analysing individual incidents, and instead highlighting systemic failures that perpetuate VAW in society, such as persistence of patriarchal norms regulating female and male sexuality. On the other hand, while facilitating access to new financial resources through

international funding mechanisms, the ‘NGO-ization’ of the indigenous women’s movement also brought new challenges. Feminist causes suffered from ‘projectisation’ or piecemeal approaches and were often pursued as part of donor-driven agenda supported by international development organisations (Nazneen and Sultan, 2012) and thus lacked sufficient legitimacy within some segments of the population (Nazneen, 2009). Many local organisations became increasingly critical of the development sector and its influence over the fate of ‘third world women’ (Azim, 2001; 2011; Nazneen, 2009). Section 3.3.3 discusses the feminist critique of current development approaches in more detail.

Currently, while some progress has been achieved with respect to public spheres (e.g. education, employment, political participation), the debate on the aspects pertaining to the private sphere (e.g. questions regarding marriage, inheritance and family life; and the debate on veil and women’s clothing) has been impacted by the re-emergence of political Islam and the insistence these aspects are in the purview of the Sharia law (Azim, 2011; Hossein, 2021).

In line with this development, the main Islamic party, Jamaat-e-Islami, is mostly supportive of women’s participation in the public sphere, but rejects reforms of the personal status code advocated by secular women’s rights organisations (Nazneen, 2009). The party promotes so-called ‘complementarity’ between the roles of men and women, and as such opposes full equality between women and men. Femininity is constructed within the normative framework of women’s appropriateness and respectability, which is open to interpretations and therefore to a host of restrictions imposed on women (Nazneen, 2009). Still, even in the secular development discourse, a progressive Muslim woman is often represented as an exception rather than a norm (Azim, 2000, 2011). Competing visions of women’s rights have fuelled violent conflicts between Islamists and secular organisations (Azim, 2011).

At the start of the 2020s (despite some regression due to the Covid-19), and as Bangladesh is close to graduating from the category of Least Developed Countries (Hossein, 2021, p.445), the discussion continues on the future of women’s rights in Bangladesh, particularly with respect to the alignment of the Sustainable Development Goals and the vision by Islamist political parties (Hossein, 2021).

2.3.2 Women's political representation

As noted, Bangladesh has managed to adopt almost all major progressive international conventions and treaties in line with the progressive global discourse on human rights. It also signed up to the Millennium Development Goals (2000-2015) and later the Sustainable Development Goals (2015-2030). Table 2.1 lists the main international treaties and conventions ratified by Bangladesh.

Table 2.1: Main treaties and conventions and year of ratification

Main international treaties and conventions	Year of ratification
Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention	1972
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination	Acceded in 1979
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women ⁵	Acceded in 1984
Convention on the Rights of the Child	1990
Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages ⁶	Acceded in 1998
Equal Remuneration Convention	1998
Convention on the Political Rights of Women ⁷	Acceded in 1998
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights ⁸	Acceded in 1998
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	2000
Convention on Worst Forms of Child Labour	2001
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	2007

At a national level, Vision 2021 is one of the key policy documents outlining development objectives of the current regime, including with respect to women's empowerment (BPC, 2007). The main policy goals are listed in Table 2.2. The target year to achieve its goals – 2021

⁵ The Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh does not consider as binding upon itself the provisions of article 2, [...] as they conflict with Sharia law based on Holy Quran and Sunna.

⁶ With reservations to Article 1: consent to marriage and Article 2: minimum age for marriage.

⁷ Reservations to Article 3: consonance with constitution and Article 9: consent of disputing parties.

⁸ Bangladesh interprets the self-determination clause in Article 1 as applying in the historical context of colonialism. It also reserves the right to interpret the labour rights in Articles 7 and 8 and the non-discrimination clauses of Articles 2 and 3 within the context of its constitution and domestic law.

– is highly symbolic; it refers to the fiftieth anniversary of the declaration of independence in 1971.

Table 2.2: The Vision 2021 goals

Goal 1: To become a participatory democracy
Goal 2: To have an efficient, accountable, transparent and decentralised system of governance
Goal 3: To become a poverty-free middle-income country
Goal 4: To have a nation of healthy citizens
Goal 5: To develop a skilled and creative human resource
Goal 6: To become a globally integrated regional economic and commercial hub
Goal 7: To be environmentally sustainable
Goal 8: To be a more inclusive and equitable society

Currently, all major political parties, including Islamic parties, recognise the need to formulate some political standpoint on women's rights within political programmes, drawn from national and international discourses (Azim, 2000; Nazneen, 2009; Hossain, 2021). While this can be seen as significant progress in comparison to some Muslim majority countries, the two main political parties are also careful about selecting issues they support in order not to antagonise certain voters that would deem such issues 'un-Islamic' (Nazneen, 2009, p.2). In addition, all major political parties largely apply the instrumentalist approach to women's rights based on justification of certain benefits (e.g. economic progress; efficiency) rather than the pursuit of women's equal rights agenda.

Given the dominant instrumentalist paradigm, successive governments, with support from priority international donors, endorsed publicly acceptable interventions benefiting women, such as microfinance programmes, access to public services, employment, pensions and other non-controversial development issues. Akbar (2018, p.42) further notes that the national budget dedicated to gender-progressive programmes has been fragmented and includes over forty sectors. Thus, the public funding for women's empowerment is too small to make a deeper impact.

Women's organisations have been vocal advocates of women's inclusion in the nation building (Azim, 2000; 2011; Panday and Li, 2014; Huq, 2016; Nazneen and Sultan, 2012; Nazneen,

2017). However, they have also struggled to influence the agenda of political parties (Nazneen and Sultan, 2012, p.90). As noted, the 'NGO-isation' of women's organisations' approaches is one of the reasons for the weakening of the women's empowerment agenda. Some organisations focus on welfare aspects and service delivery, whereas others try to maintain their key focus on advocacy but also struggle to fund their activities. In addition, the discourse on women's rights is often perceived as 'the Western agenda', reinforced by the particular vocabulary applied in development projects. The institutionalisation of previously voluntary organisations has also transformed the ways of working which has led to the divide between older and younger feminists (Nazneen and Sultan, 2012, p.95). Younger activists tend to perceive their engagement on women's rights issues as a professional career, and thus as a remunerated activity. They also prioritise other approaches in advocacy, particularly within digital space, which is not always understood by the previous generation of activists (Nazneen and Sultan, 2012, p.100-101). Some of the differences may also stem from the class divide. Why older feminists tend to be middle-class professional women, younger ones come from various social backgrounds, including lower classes, which impacts their perspectives on priorities and strategies. Some important political gains have been however achieved. Banning of the two-finger test conducted on rape victims by the High Court of Bangladesh in 2018 is an evidence of some strength of women's rights movement in Bangladesh.

In terms of political representation, the enactment of the Local Government (Union Parishad) 1997 Act provided a crucial opportunity for women (Khan and Ara, 2006; Huq, 2016). The country applies an elaborate system of reserved seats for women at both local and national levels. These are intended as temporary measures until women's representation can be considered adequate (Paasilinna, 2016, p.3). The first quota for women in the national parliament was introduced by the 1972 constitution with fifteen reserved seats. Since then, this measure has been amended three times, gradually increasing to the current fifty reserved seats as per the 15th Constitutional Amendment (Paasilinna, 2016, p.5). As per the 2019 data, women's representation in the Bangladesh national parliament stood at 20.63 per cent.

The appointment to reserved seats is done by respective political parties, each candidate requiring a proposer and seconder from the same party (Paasilinna, 2016, p.6). However, this system increases disproportionality of election results as it does not even out the disproportional representation of women in elections – the system is based on general seats allocation, which is already disproportional with respect to gender parity (Paasilinna, 2016,

p.7). In fact, it can be understood as a measure to strengthen the dominance of the winning party in the parliament (Paasilinna, 2016, p.8). The quota for nominating women in each political party is determined by an internal decision. The electoral law requires 33 per cent of all positions in party committees to be occupied by women by 2020. However, this target has been missed by political parties.

At *upazilla* level councils, two different nominating systems are used: direct election for the position of one Vice-Chair reserved for a woman, in addition to Chair and general Vice-Chair (i.e. not reserved seats). In 2014, only three women in the then 491 councils were elected as Chairs and just one woman was elected to the general seat of Vice-Chair (Paasilinna, 2016, p.8). Further, general seats at *upazilla* councils are filled indirectly by the people elected at the union level and in the urban municipalities. In councils, 25 per cent of general seats are reserved for women. In union council elections, approximately one quarter of seats are reserved for women, with each voter casting a ballot for general as well as women's council seats. On the whole, very few general seat council women tend to be elected, along with a limited number of general seat female mayors (Paasilinna, 2016, p.10).

According to some observers, the quota system contributes to tokenism of women's representation, and undermines *meaningful*⁹ representation (Paasilinna, 2016, p.4; Ahmed and Hasan, 2018; Akbar, 2018; Rahman, 2019). The evidence shows that reserved seat parliamentary members, or 'quota women', are not completely docile and inactive, however, the conditions for their active representative roles, both with respect to women's rights as well as other issues, are restricted (Ahmed and Hasan, 2018). Among the major factors is a strict alignment with the aims of each political party, limiting women's chances of introducing new agendas outside of the party interests. Moreover, reserve seats women in the parliament are disadvantaged vis-à-vis their directly elected female and male counterparts as they do not dispose of the budget and power to represent the interests of a particular constituency (Ahmed and Hasan, 2018). Women in political parties thus often find themselves in conflict between their loyalty to women's issues and political party interests (Panday and Li, 2014, p.733).

Several researchers (Paasilinna, 2016, p.3; Ahmed and Hasan, 2018, p.37) note that family connections are a crucial path for women in Bangladesh to enter politics. With the exception

⁹ Emphasis in the original text.

of the two female leaders of the two main political parties, and the speaker of the parliament, the number of women in top positions of political power is low. In addition to socio-cultural aspects, such as dependency on support of male relatives and underestimation of women as adequate representatives of constituents' needs (Paasilinna, 2016, p.15; Rahman, 2019, p.62), lack of financial resources is also frequently cited as one of the main obstacles for accessing political representation, including at the lower levels of the state administration (Paasilinna, 2016, p.12), in addition to wide-spread corruption (Rahman, 2019, p.66). In addition, politics is still perceived as a domain rewarding aggressive 'masculine' behaviour, while sexist behaviour against women politicians, sexist attacks in media and other forms of psychological violence is tolerated. Prospective female candidates also often self-sensor their political ambitions as a result of internalised patriarchal values (Akbar, 2018).

2.4 Women's inclusion in the recent socio-economic development of Bangladesh

2.4.1 Introduction

The eradication of poverty is an explicit goal incorporated in Vision 2021 and led by the National Planning Commission in the spirit of 'no one left behind' (Wood and Devine, 2017, p.2). However, Wood and Devine (2017, p.3) note a feasible strategy to reduce poverty in Bangladesh would be better expressed through the notion of 'sharing the well', implying a change in the attitudes towards redistribution and addressing inequalities reproduced by elite power-holders, which, as the authors underscore, is a much harder political economy question. Nonetheless, the official poverty rates have dropped significantly in recent years. While in 2000, 48.8 per cent of people were considered poor, by 2016 the poverty rate had halved to 24.3 per cent. The rate of extreme poverty dropped even faster, particularly in the 2000s, and included those with no schooling and no land (Sen and Ali, 2017, p.13), signalling a "more robust and holistic approach to tackling poverty" (Sen and Ali, 2017, p.14). According to some researchers, however, the current poverty rates are based on unrealistically low poverty thresholds, masking the real extent of poverty in Bangladesh (Ali and Wood, 2017, p.178).

2.4.2 Female labour participation

Bangladesh has dramatically transformed its once largely agrarian low technology economy, thanks to, among other factors, an active public strategy to promote industries and urbanisation (ADB, 2016, p. xiv). Almost 90 per cent of the population in the early 1970s lived in rural areas, while half of them were landless (Wood and Devine, 2017, p.4). By 2019, 34 per cent of the population lived in urban areas (World Bank, 2020b). According to the data¹⁰, the share of labour in agriculture, forestry and fishery has remained high at 45.10 per cent. Manufacturing employed only 16.36 per cent of the labour force in the same year and in services the total labour share was 34.11 per cent (ADB, 2016). It is also worth noting that, despite a very low official unemployment rate of 4 per cent in 2020 (World Bank, 2020c), a significant proportion of workers are poor, underemployed or work in the informal economy.

Bangladesh's export-oriented trade policies are biased in favour of ready-made garments; correspondingly other sectors have been unable to drive job creation, in particular new types of skilled jobs (ADB, 2016, p.36). There is limited evidence of changes in the current export policies focused primarily on textiles (Muzzini and Aparicio, 2013, p.4-5). The ready-made garments industry accounts for 83 per cent of all Bangladesh's exports (ILO, 2020, p.2). It is estimated that female workers constitute approximately 80 per cent of 4 million workers in this industry (ILO, 2020, p.3). A substantial proportion of factories are located in export-processing zones (EPZ), free trade zones established to promote exports. The ready-made garments dominate primarily in Dhaka and Chattogram EPZs.

Following highly publicised cases of industrial accidents in Bangladesh, such as the collapse of Rana Plaza in Dhaka in April 2013 where some 1,200 workers died and hundreds more were seriously injured, more attention has been paid to the enactment of the 2013 amendment to the Bangladesh Labour Act of 2006. The principal areas included the improvements in freedom of association, collective bargaining, and safety of the workplace (ADB, 2016, p.21). According to a report by the New York University, however, only a fraction of the 7,000 factories in the country had improved significantly (Labowitz and Baumann-Pauly, 2015, p.5). According to the same report, one third of the 479 factories surveyed were informal subcontractors, the clear majority of which produced at least partly for export (Labowitz and Baumann-Pauly, 2015, p. 4). Formal contracts are often not issued in informal employment settings, resulting in restricted

¹⁰ The data from 2013 (ADB, 2016).

workers' rights. For instance, taking maternity leave of 16 weeks guaranteed by the Labour Law 2006 (ADB, 2016, p.117) or receiving a pension contribution from an employer can be a challenge without guaranteed contractual obligations. On the other hand, Bangladesh has enacted a minimum wage policy that applies to all sectors with the exception of those covered by industry-specific wages. The minimum wage is set nationally every five years by the National Minimum Wage Board. As of 2018, the minimum wage in the ready-made garment industry was 8,000 taka per month (80 euros).

Despite high overall rate of employment, women's participation in the labour market has lagged behind men's. As of 2017, almost 81 per cent of men over fifteen years of age participated in the national economy (World Bank, 2020d) the corresponding figure for women was only 34 per cent (World Bank, 2020e). Moreover, while much of the discourse on women's labour participation has concentrated on working conditions in the ready-made garment factories and on 'docile' female workers (Elson and Pearson, 1981; Khosla, 2009; Alam, Blanch and Smith, 2011), less attention has been paid to women's horizontal and vertical segregation in the labour market, i.e. women are not only concentrated in certain sectors, they also face difficulties accessing better quality jobs with sufficient social protection. For instance, Macchiavello et al. (2020, p.6) point out that women account for only 8 per cent of supervisors or managers in sewing departments of Bangladesh's the ready-made garments although according to that study, 80 per cent of all non-supervisory production workers are female.

Women represent half of all workers in the agricultural sector, which has the lowest wages in the economy, and is characterised by high informality of employment and reliance on unpaid labour (ADB, 2016, p.38). Such work can involve a variety of activities such as managing seeds, post-harvesting activities, cow and goat rearing, backyard poultry, pisciculture, horticulture, and food processing. Women are also involved in cane and bamboo works, fishnet making, and daily labour, particularly women from extremely poor landless households. Education requirements in this sector are low – more than one third of agricultural workers have no education, while only 1.5 per cent finished any type of technical and vocational education (ADB, 2016, p.38). Thus, there is limited potential for growth of female salaried employment, particularly skill-based jobs offering higher wages.

On the other hand, pharmaceuticals have marked a high growth of female employment with minimal gender disparity¹¹ in wages. It is also the sector offering largely skilled employment (ADB, 2016, p.41). In contrast, electronics and information technologies (IT) are largely dominated by male workers (ADB, 2016, p.42). Both electronics and IT represent a very small proportion of the GDP and the labour force, though the interest in IT related services has been growing (ADB, 2016, p.43). Tourism is another sector with negligible employment of women – it accounted for less than one percent of female employment; however, this sector in general is negligible and corresponds to only 1.5 per cent of the labour share (ADB, 2016, p.44). On the other hand, the sector offers growth potential in domestic tourism thanks to the expanding middle class, offering job creation opportunities for the poor (ADB, 2016, p.45). Furthermore, ten per cent of all public administration jobs should be filled by women, which is not an insignificant number, but this strategy is not fully implemented (ADB, 2016, p.117). A study on women civil servants by Karim (2019) noted that women often avoided posts with higher responsibilities in the state administration due to reproductive workload at home.

Cultural factors stemming from patriarchal authority of the adult male, and patrilinear descent and inheritance traced through the male line, have historically had an adversarial impact on women's labour participation (Ashraf, 2014; Asaduzzaman, Kabir and Radovic-Markovic, 2015; ADB, 2016, p.100). One of the most critical practices are constraints placed on women's activities outside their home, referred to as *purdah*. *Purdah* can relate to restrictions on women's physical mobility, associated with other social obligations, such as requiring male guardianship when outside of her home, obtaining permission to leave home as well as spiritual *purdah*, i.e. purity of thought and action, and maintaining bodily modesty, such as covering the body (although wearing a burqa is less common), avoiding eye contact with non-kin men, having tied and covered hair, speaking in a low voice and keeping eyes downcast (Karim, 2011, p.59; Asadullah and Wahhaj, 2016).

It is worth pointing out that there is a broad range of interpretations and implementations of *purdah* practices and women find creative ways to challenge or avoid these restrictions (Karim, 2011, p.60). Nonetheless, according to a recent study by Asadullah and Wahhaj (2016, p.10), 76.8 per cent of women in their sample reported belonging to a household where some sort of *purdah* was practiced. Non-poor districts such as Sylhet, Comilla and Chandpur appeared

¹¹ For every 100 taka earned by a male worker, women were paid 97 taka on average (ADB, 2016, p.41).

highly conservative and favoured *purdah* practices, while, Rangpur, the poorest of all divisions, was the least conservative. At the same time, neighbouring northern districts, Rajshahi and Bogra, demonstrated a high prevalence of *purdah* as well as other poorer districts in the south (e.g. Barguna and Patuakhali). As the authors conclude, there is no simple correlation between poverty and prevalence of conservative social norms (Asadullah and Wahhaj, 2016, p.10). Figure 2.2 shows the current map of Bangladesh.

Figure 2.2: Current administrative units of Bangladesh - divisions



Source: Maps of the World, 2019

The female-centric service delivery model adopted by a number of NGOs in Bangladesh can be positively correlated with disrupting some conservative gender attitudes and contributing to a higher acceptability of female paid labour seen recently (Asadullah and Wahhaj, 2016, p.6). However, Kabeer, Mahmud and Tasneem (2017, p.237) note that, while women's employment options have increased in recent decades, the male breadwinner model remains strong in

policy-making and popular discourse in the country, whereas women continue to face various forms of harassment in public space.

Marriage, especially at an early age, followed by an early first pregnancy, can significantly affect women's working lives, particularly given women's expected reproductive responsibilities in their families (Raihan and Bidisha, 2018, p.14). According to a study by Raihan and Bidisha (2018, p.17), marriage is negatively correlated with women's paid employment but positively associated with self-employment. Similarly, urban areas tend to play a positive role in women's wage employment (Raihan and Bidisha, 2018, p.17). The fertility rate has dropped considerably in Bangladesh in recent years, although there is still a high prevalence of very young mothers. According to Hossain, Mahumud and Saw (2015), almost 80 per cent of women married before the age of 18 in Bangladesh; of these, 5.5% married before 13 years of age. Furthermore, although banned by law (Article 2, Dowry Prohibition Act, 1980), dowry (payment to the groom's family), originally a Hindu practice, has been widely practiced by Muslims since the 1970s, replacing 'bride's price' (Karim, 2011, p.83). This is despite dowry being considered *haram* (sin) in Islam (Ahmed and Kashem, 2015, p.176). Evidence suggests that the practice of dowry has in fact become more common and is practiced even by educated families (Ahmed and Kashem, 2015, p.173). Rural men can demand dowry for economic reasons such as oversees migration, finding employment or covering their business costs (Karim, 2011, p.83; White, 2017). Dowry is also considered as one of the main reasons for losing household assets and indebtedness (Ahmed and Kashem, 2015, p.172). A number of other socially embedded factors play a role in establishing the actual price paid such as a girl's physical appearance and the colour of her complexion (Ahmed and Kashem, 2015, p.174).

Traditional economic theory, based on rational bargaining models, views women's opportunities for labour force participation as empowering for women, although there is no clear-cut evidence for this (ADB, 2016, p.102). Nonetheless, some evidence collected in Bangladesh suggests that employment, particularly formal wage employment outside of the home, contributes positively to some measures of empowerment and autonomy for women (Kabeer, Mahmud and Tasneem, 2017). The study by Kabeer, Mahmud and Tasneem (2017, p.241-243) identified lower association of women's formal paid work with some patriarchal cultural norms, such as a preference for sons, higher correlation with a sense of control over their own lives, and greater ease in the public domain. Semi-formal work arrangements also reported some positive results; while economically inactive women appeared to be affected by

the strongest patriarchal relations. In addition, Hossain (2017) challenges the notion of dichotomous relations between marriage and women's employment. Instead, with reference to middle-class professional women, the author concludes that women do not reject social and gender norms associated with femininity, particularly being a mother, a wife and a daughter-in-law, but negotiate within existing patriarchal structures to enable them to benefit from new labour relations. Women often employ the gender norms of feminine respectability and compliance with their 'feminine' duties, although their actual performance vary depending on a woman's personal circumstances. The research by Hossain (2017) also notes that such bargaining with patriarchy can be also utilised by low-income women to expand their economic opportunities.

Given the persistence of patriarchal attitudes on femininity and masculinity, entering employment can bring many risks for women, including the risk of violence and sexual harassment in the workplace, when traveling to and from the workplace, and even in women's households. According to the UN Women and the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 67 per cent of women in Bangladesh experience physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence during their lifetime and more than half in the last 12 months (BBS, 2016). The human rights organisation, Odhikar, reported that, in 2019, 1,080 women and girls were raped (Odhikar, 2019), 27 per cent of which were gang-rape cases. In 2019, the gang-rape and murder of a young nurse on a bus sparked renewed protests against lack of women's protection in public spaces, just a few weeks after a female student of a *madrassa* was burnt alive for not withdrawing a sexual harassment complaint (Daily Star, 2019). It is likely many such crimes go unreported, given the social stigma attached to sexual violence. Nevertheless, in the recent years there has been increased mobilisation of the public against violence against women and girls (see Figure 2.3).

Two of the largest and most recognised Bangladeshi organisations targeting the poor, the Grameen Bank and BRAC, are credited with the growth of women's inclusion in economic activities, particularly in rural areas. The Grameen Bank, with 97 per cent of female clients (Grameen Bank, 2019), has significantly contributed to women's financial education and opening bank accounts. More recently, the Grameen Bank has promoted mobile financial services to reach women in remote areas and those dealing with mobility barriers. The expansion of mobile financial services is positively correlated with a high penetration of mobile phones in Bangladesh (Mujeri, 2017, p.73). According to Mujeri (2017, p.71), financial inclusion is crucial for achieving reduction of extreme poverty and building shared prosperity.

Direct deposit to the banks increase savings and contributes to enhancing an enabling environment for women's economic empowerment (Faruquee and Badruddoza, 2011).

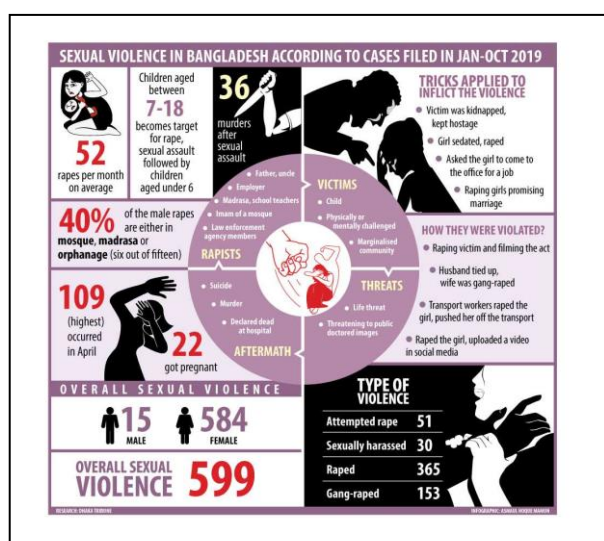
However, poor women, especially in socially conservative areas continue to face social barriers to access formal financial services. Low-income women may be uncomfortable in dealing with male bank agents, whereas lack of maths skills may prevent women from keeping precise records of their transactions. Women without a living-in spouse may be reluctant to admit to bank managers they manage their household by themselves in situations of wife's abandonment, a common phenomenon in rural Bangladesh (Karim, 2011, p.93; Kustin, 2015, p.31). Conservative Islamic leaders also accuse non-Islamic microfinance institutions of corrupting women and introducing non-Islamic social practices. Conflicts with rural clergy led to wide-spread violence against microfinance NGOs in the 1990s with the help of students from conservative *madrassas* (Karim, 2011, p. 27-29; Lewis, 2015, p.125; Mannan, 2015).

The critique of microfinance models as successful poverty reduction tools promoting women's empowerment in Bangladesh (and elsewhere) has persisted. For example, women can join microfinance groups only as 'puppets' at the request of their husbands or other relatives (Karim, 2011, p.55; Guérin, Kumar and Agier, 2013, p.86). In some cases, men, that took a loan in a woman's name, could not repay loans and were left women with huge debts, prompting some to take their own life (Levin, 2012, p.114; Sangwan, Nayak and Samanta, 2020). According to Karim (2011, p. xvi-xvii) the model popularised by the Grameen Bank (group formation, joint liability for loans, saving schemes, strict fiscal discipline) "manipulate[s] existing kin and social relations to regulate financial behaviour of individual borrowers to create wealth for the NGOs". Karim (2011, p.55) found that most loans by women in her research sample were used to cover personal needs and not invested in productive activities; women also borrowed disproportionally to their incomes, increasing the risk of default. To manage loans, female clients engaged in moneylending, prohibited by the Qur'an (Karim, 2011, p.56). Karim (2011, p.84) was particularly critical of 'the economy of shame' employed by NGOs to achieve high repayment rates, whereas female borrowers often engaged various strategies to resist such coercive techniques (Karim, 2011, p.87).

While Islamic microfinance is increasingly seen as "a valuable and novel tool for development and poverty alleviation" (Kustin, 2015, p.15), especially in communities which may be reluctant to use conventional (i.e. non-Islamic) financial services (Karim, Tarazi, and Reille, 2008; Abdelkader and Salem, 2013; Kustin, 2015), according to Kustin (2015, p.15), women's

access to financial services is a neglected area within Islamic financing. In conventional microfinance, women are normally the key target group and the programmes make explicit the objective of women's empowerment through access to microfinance and entrepreneurship, Islamic microfinance institutions avoid such terminology and instead refers to family empowerment in line with patriarchal values (Kustin, 2015, p.29), particularly perceiving a man as the main provider in a household.

Figure 2.3: Newspapers informing on SGBV



Source: Independent, 2019



Source: Dhaka Tribune, 2019

2.4.3 Parity in education and employment-related skills

Bangladesh has been commended by the international community for its progress in education attainments at all levels of its vast school system serving the needs of millions of children, youth and adults. In addition to public schools, the Bangladesh educational system also incorporates educational institutions run by private entities, including non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and religious groups. The instruction is normally carried out in Bengali, however, English is widely spoken in higher education. The formal education sector is guided by a series of policy frameworks such as the National Education Policy (2010), National Skills Development Policy (2011), Seventh Five Year Plan (2016-2020) and Vision 2021. Bangladesh has also subscribed to the Dakar Framework for Action and its goals under the rubric of Education for All (Chowdhury and Rahman, 2015, p.33).

NGOs are a significant contributor in increasing access to pre-primary schooling (3-5 years olds), especially for the children from low-income families; the Ministry of Religious Affairs also organises various mosque-based early learning centres (Chowdhury and Rahman, 2015, p.34). Bangladesh has developed Early Learning Development Standards (ELDS) but these are poorly implemented (Rahman, Khan and Sabbih, 2016, p.17). In general, public day-care centres for working parents are not common in Bangladesh. According to one study from 2013, only thirteen per cent of children were enrolled in pre-school education (Rahman, Khan and Sabbih, 2016, p.17). In contrast to pre-primary level, significant investment has been made in primary education. Bangladesh has made provisions for universal free and compulsory primary schooling lasting five years (children 5-9 years old). As in the pre-school sector, NGOs such as BRAC, have been instrumental in increasing access of boys and girls from remote rural areas to education, along with Muslim religious schools, *madrassas*, which generally offer similar curricula to public government schools in addition to Islamic studies (Asadulah, Chakrabarti and Chaudhury, 2013, p.188). NGOs also run various programmes supporting inclusion of children with disabilities, children from ethnic minorities and extremely poor children in education.

Education in *madrassa* can apply to a wide range of institutions – from a simple pre-school, where children learn Qur'an, to a primary or secondary school comparable to a non-religious public school, to a theological institution dedicated to studying Islam (Asadulah, Chakrabarti and Chaudhury, 2013, p.190). There are also many unregistered *madrassas*, not recognised by the state (Asadulah, Chakrabarti and Chaudhury, 2013, p.189). Government-regulated *madrassas* are overseen by the Madrassa Education Board, which approves curricula from secondary to post-graduate level (Asadulah, Chakrabarti and Chaudhury, 2013, p.190). At present, *madrassas* are also open to girls. In general, households which send their children to *madrassa*, tend to live in more deprived areas with limited infrastructure. Poorer households opt for *madrassa* education due to its lower cost (Asadulah, Chakrabarti and Chaudhury, 2013, p.203). Based on a recent survey, parents' education is positively correlated with girl's literacy (Education Watch, 2016, p.36). In addition, education in a religious school is not automatically associated with safety for girls as confirmed by the 2019 case of a 19-year old student set on fire for refusing to withdraw a sexual harassment complaint against her school principal. Besides students, teachers and former school administration staff were also implicated in the murder (Daily Star, 2019).

As noted, education levels have improved significantly in Bangladesh over recent decades, both with regards to men and women. However, closer examination of literacy prevalence shows a less optimistic picture. The 2016 nation-wide survey carried out by a civil society initiative Education Watch (2016, p.28) reveals that only 51.3 per cent of the population above eleven years of age is literate. Taking into consideration the international benchmark for adult literacy rate – the population over fifteen years of age – the prevalence is only 49 per cent among women (Education Watch, 2016, p. 28), while according to the World Bank (2020f), that figure was 72 per cent as of 2019 for the same age group. According to the Education Watch survey (2016, p.40), the most pronounced gender disparities in literacy levels were observed in rural Chittogram, Rangpur and Sylhet divisions – the areas with the lowest literacy rates (Education Watch, 2016, p.29). In small ethnic groups the literacy rate is almost twice as high for men than women – 51 per cent and 25.4 per cent respectively (Education Watch, 2016, p.37). Similarly, non-Muslim men outperform non-Muslim women by 12.6 percentage points compared to a 3.9 per cent gap for Muslims (Education Watch, 2016, p.38).

Although data suggest parents, including in rural Bangladesh, are slowly changing their attitudes towards benefits of education of girls and are willing to invest more in their education (Asadulah, Chakrabarti and Chaudhury 2013, p.202), the obstacles faced by girls and young women in accessing education persist. It has been established that a substantial part of parental decisions about girls' education is framed by cultural and other social determinants (Field and Ambrus, 2008; Sarker, Karim and Suffiun, 2017). In a prevalent patriarchal, patrilinear and patrilocal gender regime, such as the one in Bangladesh (Chowdhury, 2009), girls can be perceived as less capable than boys – this perception is particularly prominent among illiterate parents in rural and agricultural areas (Sarker, Karim and Suffiun, 2017, p.140). Gender stereotypes are indoctrinated in children from early childhood, including through education. For instance, a recent study carried out in *madrassas* and public schools showed that textbooks featured only 15 to 30 percent of characters representing women or girls, while they were often portrayed in care-giving (reproductive), rather than productive, roles (Islam and Asadullah, 2018). Gender bias accompanies students throughout the education system. Out of the 66 private universities in Bangladesh that publish data on gender composition of their faculty, only two universities had female vice-chancellors at the time and one was from a university for female students (Ahad and Gunter, 2017, p.31). Such gender bias is reinforced by the labour market composition in which boys and girls are likely to perform differently (Sarker, Karim and Suffiun, 2017, p.140). Furthermore, parents may be concerned that keeping girls in school

may lead to difficulties to find them appropriate husbands (Psaki, 2016, p.114). Despite an increasing age of marriage in recent years, this has not been accompanied by a large decrease in adolescent pregnancy (Psaki, 2016, p.116). Child marriage has been legally restricted in Bangladesh since 1929, then part of India, to 18 years (Psaki, 2016, p.117), however, exceptions can be granted on religious grounds. Bangladesh, together with Niger and Mali, has the lowest median age of marriage for women (Psaki, 2016, p.111).

Nonetheless, Bangladesh was one of the better performing developing countries in achieving the MDG on education parity between girls and boys at primary and secondary school levels. These successes can be attributed, at least in part, to a cash transfer programme supporting the families of girls in secondary school. Bangladesh was the first country in the world to implement a conditional cash transfer programme known as the Female Secondary Education Stipend Programme - FESP (Shamsuddin, 2015, p.425) to decrease gaps in education and subsequently in employment. The programme was piloted in 1982 and involved school stipends for grades six to ten, free tuition, books and exam allowances. Within a decade, the enrolment of girls in secondary schools increased by 40 per cent and in 1998 it surpassed male enrolment (Shamsuddin, 2015, p.426). Girls were eligible to receive a stipend so long as they remained unmarried, had a minimum 75 per cent attendance, and scored at least 45 per cent in school exams (Shamsuddin, 2015, p.429). Two additional educational programmes for girls were launched in 1990 – compulsory primary education and tuition programmes for girls (Shamsuddin, 2015, p.426) and other initiatives such as a school curriculum reform, teachers' training, recruitment of female teachers, development of school infrastructure and so on (Shamsuddin, 2015, p.429).

Yet, FESP female students still lagged behind male counterparts in completing their secondary education and reaching class 10 (final year of secondary school) (Amin and Huq, 2008; Chowdhury and Rahman, 2015, p.35). The research on the impact of FESP concluded that the programme had led to an increase in the marriage age for young women and their labour participation, but the labour market failed to reward graduates with higher wages corresponding to their skills level; mainly due to difficulties for women in accessing employment comparable to men (Shamsuddin, 2015, p.437). A number of FESP graduates earned a living in the service industry or were self-employed in micro-businesses which tend to generate lower incomes (Shamsuddin, 2015, p.441).

Experience across a number of countries demonstrates that vocational education and training beyond general education facilitate transition from school to the labour market (Education Watch, 2016). A formal Technical and Vocational Education and Training programme (TVET) was introduced in Bangladesh with this central aim in 2007 thanks to assistance from the ILO and funding from the European Union. TVET is implemented at secondary, higher secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary levels. The current enrolment in TVET is rather low, while male TVET students tend to outnumber girls by the ratio 2:1 (Education Watch, 2016, p.53-55). Some 42 per cent of TVET graduates reported not using gained skills in their occupation (Education Watch, 2016, p.71). The three most frequent TVET areas included: agriculture and food processing, tailoring, and handicrafts (Education Watch, 2016, p.57). In addition, the analysis of training recipients reveals a strong gender bias: for instance, 61.2 per cent of women participated in tailoring training compared to 5.8 per cent of men; 0.2 per cent of women took part in electrical and electronics training compared to 14.1 per cent of men; no woman was enrolled in training on mechanical repairing compared to 14.8 per cent of men; and 14.2 per cent of women completed training on IT compared to 24.4 per cent of men (Education Watch, 2016, p.57). Informal and non-formal training for women overwhelmingly focused on rural handicrafts (46.4 per cent out of all female trainees), tailoring (32.9 per cent) and agriculture and food (16.1 per cent) (Education Watch, 2016, p.63).

It is widely acknowledged that information and communication technologies (ICTs) increasingly play a crucial role in developing skills for the 21st Century labour market and have a potential for lifelong occupational learning as well as improving personal well-being. In Bangladesh, however, an emerging digital divide represents a new form of inequality in knowledge, information and learning. According to the aforementioned Education Watch survey, on average only 9.6 per cent of the nationwide sample had access to the Internet, including 4.8 per cent of women (Education Watch, 2016, p.81). The wealthiest twenty percent are ten times more likely to have access to a computer and more than six times more likely to have access to the Internet (Education Watch, 2016, p.85) Only 1.1 per cent of rural women have access to a computer compared to 14.8 per cent of men in urban Bangladesh (Education Watch, 2016, p.76). On the other hand, mobile devices are a common tool used by both rural and urban populations – on average 78.5 per cent have access to a mobile phone, including 73 per cent of rural women (Education Watch, 2016, p.76). The gender digital divide is lower in the households where women are the main decision-makers (Education Watch, 2016, p.92). Those in the 11 to 29 years old age category, the main beneficiaries of recent educational

policies, have the highest access to the Internet, communication devices and reading material, including newspapers (Education Watch, 2016, p. 78 and 87).

With respect to closing the literacy gap, at the current pace, universal literacy *at initial levels* would be reached in 2060 and *advance level*¹² literacy of all citizens in 2094 (Education Watch, 2016, p.102). While normally it is expected children gain literacy by the third or fourth grade of primary school, with the current standards in Bangladesh, at least six to seven years of schooling is required to have initial literacy skills for eighty percent of the population (Education Watch, 2016, p.100). Similarly, according to a study by Chowdhury and Rahman (2015, p.35), only a quarter of students in the final year of primary education have adequate skills in Bangla and one third in Mathematics. In addition, urban youth outperform their rural counterparts in each of the four components of literacy (Education Watch report (2016, p.42).

The Skills Development Policy was adopted in 2011 and the National Skills Development Council, with the Prime Minister as Chairperson, was formed in the same year. The policy vision states:

“Skills development in Bangladesh will be recognised and supported by government and industry as a coordinated and well planned strategy for national and enterprise development. The reformed skills development system will empower all individuals to access decent employment and ensure Bangladesh’s competitiveness in the global market through improved skills, knowledge and qualifications that are recognised for quality across the globe” (GoB, 2011).

This commitment demonstrates a high-level recognition of the need to invest in training of *all*¹³ individuals joining an adaptable and trained workforce – a key element of a productive and competitive economy (Education Watch, 2016). Research, however, points to lack of quality-related interventions, such as failing to address inadequate physical infrastructure, lack of appropriate teaching-learning materials and aids, and ineffective teaching-learning practices (Rahman, Khan and Sabbih, 2016, p.19; Education Watch, 2016, p.106). Moreover, more effective ways of market-responsive education and training models are yet to be developed (Education Watch, 2016, p.102) to decrease the mismatch between acquired skills and

¹² Education Watch, instead of using a dichotomous scale (literate/non-literate) applies four levels of literacy: 1) non-literate, 2) semi-literate, 3) literate at *initial* level, and 4) literate at *advanced* level. Emphasis in the original text. (Education Watch, 2016, p.6)

¹³ Emphasis added by the author.

occupation (Education Watch, 2016, p.103), in addition to narrowing gender, age and residence disparities in education (Education Watch, 2016, p.106).

2.4.4 Environmental challenges and their effects on low-income women

Flooding is an annual occurrence in Bangladesh during the monsoon season and while the people and the economy had adapted to the impact of these seasonal inundations, coping capacity can no longer keep up with the frequency and extent of natural calamities, particularly in low-income communities. Bangladesh is now considered one of the most affected countries by climate change (Shah, 1999; Younus, 2014; Islam and Van Amstel, 2018). Recently, damaging floods were registered in 2015, 2017 and 2020 compounded by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Besides flooding, Bangladesh faces a constant risk of tropical storms, primarily in the southern coastal areas. The 2007 Cyclone Sidr, was accompanied by tidal waves up to five metres and surges up to six metres, breaching coastal and river embankments, and resulting in extensive physical destruction. According to the Government of Bangladesh, the total losses caused by the Sidr amounted to 1.67 billion US dollars (GoB, 2008). Facing these disasters, the Bangladesh government has taken significant steps to reduce the impacts of extreme climatic events.

The continued expansion of human activity has exacerbated the wide-spread degradation of once rich biodiversity of the Bengal (Rahman, 2015). In the hilly areas, including Sylhet, Chattogram, Cox's Bazar, Chittagong Hill Tracts, Mymensingh and Panchagar, the natural forest has diminished significantly due to excessive logging (Basak et al., 2015). Similar environmental degradation has been observed in the natural mangrove forest, the Sundarbans, declared a World Heritage Site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). Its shrinking area size has increased the salinity of fresh water deeper in the mainland, depriving the local communities of fresh drinking water, while the waterlogged area has not only expanded but stays under water for a longer period of time (Awal, 2014). In contrast with the southern districts, northern areas are more prone to droughts, attributed to various causes, including the impacts of climate change and variations in the rainfall patterns as well as the deforestation and over-exploitation of the natural resources (Islam et al., 2014). Scarcity of fresh drinking water has become an acute problem in Bangladesh attributed also to the man-made contamination of surface and ground water as a

result of inappropriate use of fertilisers and pesticides in agriculture as well as unregulated industries (Malek et al., 2014).

The rising population, economic growth and changing cultural habits have also led to increased volumes of non-biodegradable waste discharged in the environment. The City Corporation of Dhaka is currently able to collect only half of the waste produced by the city population (Matter, Dietschi and Zurbrügg, 2013). Bangladesh is currently amongst the countries with worst environmental sustainability indicators (see Table 2.3). With the current 163,046,161¹⁴ inhabitants, Bangladesh is the most densely populated country and one of the most populous territories in the world (Islam, 2017). Dhaka accounts for as much as 60 per cent of urban population growth (Islam, 2017, p.128), followed by Chattogram, the second largest city (Islam, 2017, p.129). It is predicted that the urban population will outnumber the rural population by 2046 (Islam, 2017, p.127), creating a significant policy challenge for successive governments to deliver prosperity and well-being for all citizens (Islam, 2017, p.126). With the exception of Dhaka and Chattogram, other smaller cities and *pourashava* (urban municipalities), such as Comilla, Bogra and Jessore, have a very narrow economic base (Muzzini and Aparicio, 2013, p.2) and are largely service-based economies offering limited employment opportunities (Muzzini and Aparicio, 2013, p.5).

The development of urban areas has been carried out at the expense of quality of life (Muzzini and Aparicio, 2013, p.8). The urban infrastructure and services, in particular in the metropolitan Dhaka, have lagged behind the high rate of rural outmigration (Muzzini and Aparicio, 2013, p.3). Dhaka was rated the fourth least liveable city in the world out of 141 cities, according to the Economist Intelligence Unit Index (EIU, 2017). The poor infrastructure, particularly high traffic congestion in Dhaka, has prompted the relocation of a number of factories to peri-urban areas (Muzzini and Aparicio, 2013, p.7). Dhaka is particularly badly equipped to receive labour migrants. While not all rural migrants are poor, a significant proportion of them are and thus cannot afford quality housing. Dhaka is home to thousands of slum and squatter locations, with the largest ones accommodating thousands of people, mostly earning a living as daily labourers. For instance, the Korail slum, located near the wealthiest Dhaka neighbourhoods, has more than 100,000 inhabitants (Islam, 2017).

¹⁴ In 2019 (World Bank, 2020g).

The disproportionate impact of natural and man-made disasters on low-income women and girls in Bangladesh has been frequently noted in research (Dankelman et al., 2008; Tanny and Rahman, 2016; Tanjeela and Rutherford, 2018; Jagnoor et al., 2019), although some gaps in the availability of quality data persist. Tanny and Rahman (2016, p.115) note such gendered differences are the result of different roles and responsibilities women and men play in their households, communities and society at large, including with respect to their control over resources and decision-making. While recent socio-economic changes in Bangladesh have shifted some of these roles, low-income women continue to be disproportionately responsible for providing household management and care, workload that tends to increase with the severity of a disastrous climatic event. While Bangladesh has put in place a relatively robust policy framework to deal with the impacts of climate change and other environmental hazards, according to some, it has not adequately incorporated women's specific vulnerabilities and gaps in inclusion of women and girls at all levels of policy making persist (Tanjeela and Rutherford, 2018; Jagnoor et al., 2019).

In line with the *Bangladesh National Plan for Disaster Management* more efforts have been made in establishing early warning systems and shelters at communal level in recent years, in the country with practised *purdah*, public harassment and violence against women and girls, women are often hesitant to move to overcrowded public shelters during a disaster (Tanny and Rahman, 2016, p.116). Increased salinity and waterlogging in coastal areas (Awal, 2014), on the other hand, put an extra burden on women to gather potable water to cover diverse family needs. Ensuring adequate sanitation and hygiene without adequate infrastructure or when sanitation systems are damaged is particularly challenging for women and girls during menstruation and after giving a birth, especially as such aspects can be guided by restrictive cultural norms and taboos (Mondal et al., 2017).

Loss of livestock, poultry and other productive assets can be devastating for women's livelihoods as coping mechanisms available to low-income families are extremely limited, and household/community level resilience to climate change has not been strengthened (Parwin and Ahasan, 2013; Islam, 2017; Hossain and Majumder, 2018). Scarcity of resources can also manifest in decreased psychological wellbeing of family members, including due to increased intra-household violence as a result of increased stress (Alam and Rahman, 2017). In addition,

young girls may be pulled from school and be at a higher risk of early marriage as parents are unable to cope with the scarcity of resources (Jagnoor et al., 2019).

Hazardous living conditions are particularly acute for women in urban areas, especially with respect to crime and sexual and gender-based violence (Ahmed and Johnson, 2013; Mazumder and Pokharel, 2019). According to the Thomas Reuter Foundation (2017a), Dhaka is the seventh most dangerous city in the world for women, while it ranks fourth in the index measuring the severity of risks of sexual violence (Thomas Reuter Foundation, 2017b). In addition, it is estimated that approximately 86 per cent of the households in Bangladesh still rely primarily on solid fuels as a domestic source of energy, leading to a high rate of acute respiratory infections among women and children, as they tend to be more house-bound than men (Naz, Page and Agho, 2015).

Table 2.3: Selected ranking of Bangladesh in the 2018 EPI Index¹⁵

Environmental Performance Index	179
Environmental Health	178
Ecosystem Vitality	153
Air Pollution	120
Biodiversity and Habitat	133
Wastewater Treatment	143
Air Quality	179
Heavy Metals	177
Lead Exposure	177
Water and Sanitation	128

¹⁵ The 2018 Environmental Performance Index (EPI) ranks 180 countries on 24 performance indicators covering environmental health and ecosystem vitality. The EPI is produced jointly by the Yale University and the Columbia University, the United States (Yale University, 2018).

2.5 Implications of the country context for the study

Bangladesh has put in place a relatively comprehensive policy framework supportive of women's economic inclusion, including the Vision 21 as the country's flagship development programme (CPD, 2007). However, while there might be fewer instances of women's direct discrimination in the labour market and the workplace as a result, women continue to face indirect discrimination stemming from structural challenges, including, but not limited to, unequal gender division of labour and violence in both private and public spheres that manifest the persistence of patriarchal norms related to the construction of femininities and masculinities (Anwary, 2015; Kamruzzman, 2015; ADB, 2016; Kabeer, Mahmud and Tasneen, 2017).

Bangladesh has undertaken various steps to reduce poverty since 1971, however, a number of challenges persists. This includes, but is not confined to, limited stable employment in the formal economy available to low-income women with lower education, especially in areas distant from large urban markets (ADB, 2016). While parity in education has improved, women in general continue to face challenges in accessing skills outside traditionally 'female' sectors offering higher earning potential. Recurrent environmental challenges and environmental degradation are also a significant factor affecting livelihoods in low-income communities (Islam and Van Amstel, 2018). Finally, while Bangladesh has a vibrant civil society, including the nation-wide women's movement with a long history of struggle for women's rights, challenges related to both women's representation in public institutions as well as representation of women's interests pointing to the prevalence of discriminatory gender norms and attitudes in society (Paasilinna, 2016, Nazneen and Sultan, 2018).

Based on the specific contextual aspects, the study considered it feasible to engage with low-income Muslim women and men on responding to the research questions outlined in Section 1.4, albeit limiting the study to heterosexual masculinities. Following the contextual overview, the specific locations for data collection were selected ensuring the balance in the research samples (poverty, environmental zones, rural/urban continuum). The chapter was also used in the outline of the masculinity continuum and the design of the research instruments 1-5 presented in Section 4.5.

Chapter 3 Analytical Framework of the Study

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines a theoretical framework for the study. It is constructed around three sub-sections corresponding to three main strands of literature drawn upon in its formulation: 1) conceptualisation of economic empowerment¹⁶; 2) women as economic actors in the context of the current global economic order; and 3) masculinities and gender (in)equality. The discussion on empowerment starts with the outline of the notion of capabilities as the foundational concept in perceiving development as a means to acquire capabilities or freedoms (Sen, 1999). Section 3.2 then continues with presenting the evolution of the concept of empowerment in the thinking of leading feminist scholars. Section 3.3 focuses on the discussion of women's labour participation in the context of global economy and the linkages of women's employment and empowerment to poverty reduction efforts, completed by situating women's economic empowerment in the context of current development practice. Section 3.4 focuses on the third strand of the theoretical framework. It first briefly discusses the complexities surrounding the understanding of the concepts of gender and gender norms, before moving the discussion to examine the concept of masculinities. This section is completed by discussing how masculinities, in their plurality, are linked to development efforts pursuing women's equality with men. The final section offers some insights into the concept of Muslim and Islamic masculinities, given the specific cultural and geographical context of the study. More details on this particular context are presented in Chapter 2. A brief conclusion of the theoretical outline of this study is provided in section 3.5.

¹⁶ A number of studies refer to both empowerment and specifically to economic empowerment. The dual nature of this concept is indicated by applying (economic) empowerment in the text of the study.

3.2 Conceptualising women's economic empowerment

3.2.1 Introduction

The introduction of advocacy on women's equality with men as part of international development is one of the main policy shifts that have occurred in this sector since its conception as a 'modern project' in the mid-20th Century. In recent decades, the concept of women's empowerment has received growing attention in mainstream development, since it was first articulated in the 1980s by feminist writers (Cornwall, 2016, p. 343). Beyond academia, the concept has been gradually embraced by a broad range of other actors, including state agencies tasked with development policies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and a variety of donors, banks and other private companies (Cornwall, 2016, p.342). However, feminist writers note that the interpretation and the application of the concept have been stripped of its transformative edge (Cornwall, 2016, p.343). Some proposed pathways to achieve empowerment outcomes using development schematic rationales, such as Theory of Change¹⁷ (ToC), fall short of capturing the complexities of non-linear processes of empowerment. Cornwall (2016, p.342) points out that empowerment "[o]nce used to describe grassroots struggles to confront and transform unjust and unequal power relations". The feminist discourse perceived it as a complex *lived* process which cannot be reduced to a set of anticipated and measurable indicators (Cornwall, 2016, p.343), as envisioned by ToC. Cornwall (2016, p.354) further explains:

"Rather than being able to envisage women in all their complexity and diversity, the consumers of development's glossies, adverts and reports meet monochromatic narratives of heroines and victims...limiting representations of women...Surprisingly, little attention has been given by mainstream development to the significance of representation...This neglect ... is exacerbated by the limits placed on transformative development initiatives by the current obsession with quantification of impact."

Before looking at the conceptualisation of empowerment, both as a process and a (non-static) outcome of gender equality, the section first discusses the capability approach proposed by Sen and Nussbaum as the ethical framework of human development, which influenced the feminist scholarship on empowerment.

¹⁷ The Theory of Change approach, developed in 1997 by the Aspen Institute, is based on the assumption that change is predictable and can be logically captured in a sequential logical framework (Mowles, 2013, p.49).

3.2.2 Capability approach

Sen's seminal work on capabilities and freedoms is a key theoretical investigation relevant for addressing feminist concerns and questions (Robeyns, 2003, p.62), including those concerned with agency and empowerment (Keleher, 2014). In Sen's definition, "[a] person's 'capability' refers to the alternative combinations of functionings that are feasible for her to achieve...Capability is thus a kind of freedom: the substantive freedom to achieve alternative functioning combination (or...the freedom to achieve various lifestyles)" (Sen, 1999, p.75). Functionings refer to "the various things a person may value doing or being" (Sen, 1999, p.75). The emphasis is put on freedom to do and to be what the person has *reason to value* (Sen, 1999, p.18). These "freedoms are not only primary ends of development, they are also among its principal means" (Sen, 1999, p.10).

The capability approach is understood as a moral framework of human development, where development is conceptualised as freedom (Sen, 1999). The role of development is to remove various types of unfreedoms, while the direction of public policy should be "influenced by the effective use of participatory capabilities by the public" (Sen, 1999, p.18). This thesis is concerned "with the agency role of the individual as a member of the public and as a participant in economic, social and political actions (varying from taking part in the market to being involved, directly or indirectly, in individual or joint activities in political and other spheres)" (Sen, 1999, p.19). Sen (1999, p.18) further explains: "[h]aving great freedom...is significant in itself for the person's overall freedom, and...important in fostering the person's opportunity to have valuable outcomes. Both are relevant to the evaluation of freedom of the members of the society and thus crucial to the assessment of the society's development".

According to Robeyns (2003, p.63), Sen criticises normative evaluations that "focus exclusively on utilities, resources, or income...because such an evaluation might hide important dimensions and lead to misleading interpersonal or intertemporal comparisons". Resource-based theories do not acknowledge that people might face challenges in converting resources into capabilities for a number of reasons (Robeyns, 2003, p.63). Agarwal (1994, p.1455), for instance, pointed out that "the gender gap in the ownership and control of property [was] the single most critical contributor to the gender gap in economic well-being, social status, and empowerment". Moreover, Sen criticised inequality approaches that assume that all people have the same utility functions (Robeyns, 2003, p.66). Sen (1999, p.70-71) notes various heterogeneities with respect to personal aspects (disability, illness, age or gender and so on);

environmental conditions; social conditions and arrangements; patterns of behaviour depending on conventions and customs; and distributions within the family.

Importantly, the capability approach is not limited to the market but considers people's beings and doings (functionings) in both market and non-market contexts (Robeyns, 2003, p.66). This perspective is shared with many feminist writers who emphasise the need to pay a closer attention to processes and outcomes in the private sphere and their impact on economic relations. For example, Okin (1989) rejects gender-neutral language (false gender neutrality), which takes men's lives as the standard and obscures specificities related to women's situations, their needs and interests. Folbre (1994) discusses the impact of care on women's working lives, while Chant (2003, 2008) sheds light on gender stereotypical views of women-headed households and their assumed vulnerability.

Furthermore, capabilities as freedoms refer to *actual* valuable options, i.e. opportunities that do not exist only formally or legally but are effectively available to the individual (Robeyns, 2003). Phillips (2004, p.4), a prominent feminist academic, like Sen, notes that the focus on the level of income and resources is insufficient to understand a person's particular situation without exploring that person's freedom to use them adequately. Drawing on Mary Wollstonecraft's writing, Phillips (2004, p.5) contrasts the dignity and independence of poor working women with the lives of affluent, but idle, middle and upper class women who depended on men not only economically but also emotionally. As Phillips (2004, p.5) points out, "[m]easured in terms of capabilities...such women were confined and constrained and denied".

Critically, Phillips (2004, p.5) challenges the notion of 'different but equal', which, in her view, is often used to justify stereotypical perceptions of women and men. For instance, women are associated with proclivity to social work based on their higher capacity to build and maintain social relations. Such claims, however, strip men of responsibility for care work, instead of exploring authentic reasons why men avoid such tasks. Phillips (2004, p.6) argues that "equality of outcome – measured...not in...terms of preference satisfaction nor in the narrower metric of income and wealth, but across the broad spectrum of resources, occupations, and roles – has to be taken as a key measure of equality of opportunity...When outcomes are 'different' (read unequal), the better explanation is that the opportunities were themselves unequal". For example, in societies, based on the male breadwinner/female dependent model, in which women provide the bulk of childcare and household work, it is not surprising that

women find it more challenging to choose careers incompatible with these household responsibilities. On the other hand, men are freer to seize such opportunities as there is expectation this work will be taken care of. Such perceptions do not only influence the choice women and men make but also the willingness to take any remedial action against inequality by those in decision making positions (Phillips, 2004, p.9). Phillips (2004, p.12) further notes that both women and men have the tendency to accommodate the options they mistakenly perceive to be the only ones available to them.

While the capability approach implies ethical individualism or the shift of the focus away from households or communities to individuals as a unit of analysis, this does not mean persons are atomistic individuals (Robeyns, 2003, p.65); quite the opposite – individual freedom is a social product (Sen, 1999, p.31) and societal arrangements, involving many institutions and systems, can enhance and guarantee the substantive freedoms of individuals, who are active agents of change, rather than passive recipients of benefits (Sen, 1999, p. xii-xiii).

Sen (1999, p.38) lists five types of instrumental human freedoms: political freedoms; economic facilities; social opportunities; transparency guarantees; and protective security, but does not insist on any specific core capabilities. In his view, any list of core capabilities should be context-dependent, where the context is both the geographical area to which it applies, and the specific area to which it is applied. Such a list can be academic, activist, or policy-oriented, abstract or applied in praxis. It can be concerned with social, political, economic, legal, psychological, or other dimensions, taken together or individually or in any combination (Sen, 1999, p.40). In his earlier work, however, Sen (1987, p.109) refers to *basic capabilities* as the starting point to assess poverty and deprivation.

According to Keleher (2014, p.61), Sen's capability approach is crucial in promoting empowerment through two central components of empowerment: agency and capability-set expansion. A person's capability set, including *un-chosen* options, reflects individual freedom to engage in the world and make significant decisions about what she will be and do in her life. In other words, a person's capability set can reflect the level of empowerment she has experienced. Agency empowerment stems from Sen's concept of agency freedom: the ability to achieve, and the process of that achievement. Other things being equal, the more valuable and valued functionings that a person is able to achieve, the more empowered she is. Empowerment, then, is the process of expanding the person's set of valuable capabilities (Keleher, 2014, p.62).

Sen makes a further distinction between participating in achievement of personal objectives and having objectives realised, even though without participating directly in that process. As explained by Keleher (2014, p.57), “[c]ontrol over resources is significantly different from access to resources”. This is not to say that expanding the scope of direct control always expands the set of freedoms the person values. Similarly, it would be a mistake to think that freedom to achieve one’s objectives is limited to what the person can control directly – hence the discussion on the responsibility of actors involved in development, which should be carried out under Sen’s framework of democratic deliberation. In turn, undemocratic processes may limit or violate agency freedom: an individual’s objectives may be realised but his or her agency can be compromised in that process (Keleher, 2014, p.60).

Sen’s capability approach has been further developed by Nussbaum (2000, 2011), who focussed on comparative quality of life and justice based on five principles: treating each person as an end; a focus on choice and freedom rather than achievements; pluralism about values; being deeply concerned with entrenched social injustices; and ascribing an urgent task to government (Robeyns, 2003). Unlike Sen, Nussbaum proposed a list of ten capabilities that, in her view, are essential for decent life lived with dignity. These include the following: 1) life; 2) bodily health; 3) bodily integrity; 4) senses, imagination and thought; 5) emotions; 6) practical reason; 7) affiliation; 8) other species; 9) play; 10) control over one’s environment. According to Alkire (2002, p.54), Nussbaum developed a highly proscriptive list of normative things-to-do and made a strong universalistic claim on social justice issues or a universal theory of the good. This does not imply that the list is insensitive to culture and context as it is formulated at a highly abstract level, and for each country or community there can be a more specific list, taking into account local differences (Nussbaum, 2000, p.70-77). As pointed out by Nussbaum (2000, p.77), the list of central capabilities was developed through a long process of discussions taking place in various countries; it is an “open-ended and humble” list, which “can always be contested and remade”.

Still, according to Charusheela (2008, p.15), grounded in the postcolonial feminist critique of ethnocentric modernism, Nussbaum’s reasoning was framed by the modernist ideology imbedded in the structural privilege of Western white scholarship. As Charusheela (2008, p.15) insists, the critique of modernist universalism is not “tantamount to relativism or to atavistic, uncritical celebration of the local and the traditional”; quite the opposite – postcolonial thought seeks to understand limitations of modernism as well as relativism and nativism (Charusheela, 2008). Still, one needs to be aware of the danger of cultural essentialism (Narayan, 1998;

Phillips, 2004, p.11). According to Sen (1999, p.32), “[t]he pointer to any real conflict between the preservation of tradition and the advantages of modernity calls for a participatory resolution, not for unilateral rejection of modernity in favour of tradition by political rulers, or religious authorities, or anthropological admirers of the legacy of the past”.

As a whole, the capability approach provides a powerful philosophical foundation for the discussion on equitable human development, much broader and deeper than the previous focus on material inequalities, and has been behind the outline of global development objectives. From the Millennium Development Goals (2000-2015), the emphasis has now shifted towards sustainable development and its representative global framework – the Sustainable Development Goals (2015-2030). However, contradictions between the need to eliminate wide-spread deprivations of freedoms and the pursuit of sustainable development have persisted (Sengupta, 2016), including at its core: a universal appeal for equality and human rights, which is not always aligned with political will to address constraints stemming from local cultural, religious, social, economic or political specificities.

Finally, according to Iversen (2003), both Sen and Nussbaum provided limited explanation on how individuals (agents), and women specifically, *gain* agency and *develop* or *expand* their capabilities to exercise their freedoms. Nonetheless, the capability approach provides a strong basis for the theoretical outline of women’s empowerment within the broader notion of pursuing gender equality, a more detailed exploration of which is the focus of the next subsection.

3.2.3 Concept of empowerment

In contrast to Sen and Nussbaum, a number of feminist and social theorists have explored the concept of empowerment with the specific focus on women and the pursuit of equality with men. In early conceptualisations, empowerment was proposed as a radical approach aiming to transform unequal power relations between women and men (Batliwala, 1993, 1994; Rowlands, 1995; Cornwall, 2016). Such an approach involves recognition of inequalities in power between women and men, and an acknowledgement that women are entitled to equal rights as men. Consequently, disparities in power relations must be addressed to bring about structural changes in society, which would result in greater equality between women and men (Molyneux, 1985; Moser, 1989). This would not be done only at an individual level but at the level of women as a social group (Phillips, 2004, p.17). Accordingly, the conceptualisation of

transformative empowerment puts emphasis on collective actions at the societal level (Cornwall, 2016, p.343), although changes at the individual level are a prerequisite for mobilisation of larger-scale transformative political action to address the structural basis of women's inequality with men (Batliwala, 1994; Rowlands, 1995; Sen, 1999).

Rowlands (1995) was among the first feminist theorists to unpack the notion of power as a root concept of empowerment. In her view, power is not neutral; instead, in one of its more obvious applications, power can be used as an instrument of domination and obedience or *power over*; for instance, power of men over other men and over women, and dominant social, political, economic, or cultural groups over those who are marginalised. Rowlands (1995, p.86), drawing on the concept of internalised oppression and domination, explored by Pheterson (1986), notes that systematic denial of power and influence leads to internalisation of “the messages [individuals] receive about what they are supposed to be like, and how they may come to believe the messages to be true... This internalised oppression is adopted as a survival mechanism, but becomes so well ingrained that the effects are mistaken for reality”.

Power over contrasts with a different use of power – one which is at play in “stimulating activity in others and raising their morale” (Rowlands, 1995, p.87). It is a kind of “leadership that comes from the wish to see a group achieve what it is capable of, where there is no conflict of interest and the group sets its own collective agenda” (Rowlands, 1995, p.87). This model of power can be defined as *power to*. In this sense, the term empowerment “refers to, and it is achieved by, increasing one's ability to resist and challenge ‘power over’” (Rowlands, 1995, p.87).

According to Rowlands (1995, p.87), particular feminist interests lie in interpreting *power over* and understanding the dynamics of oppression and internalised oppression, i.e. how less powerful individuals and groups can participate in formal and informal decision-making and how they affect the way that individuals or groups perceive themselves and are able to act and influence the world around them: “empowerment is thus more than simply opening up access to decision-making; it must also include the processes that lead people to perceive themselves as *able* and *entitled*¹⁸ to occupy that decision-making space”. This understanding of empowerment incorporates not only power to but also *power from within*.

¹⁸ Emphasis added by the author.

As noted above, power and abilities attributed to certain groups are socially constructed (Batliwala, 1993; Sen, 1999). The role of empowerment then “must involve undoing negative social constructions, so that the people affected come to see themselves as having the capacity and the right to act and have influence (Rowlands, 1995, p.87). This broader notion of empowerment has three main dimensions: 1) personal: “where empowerment is about developing a sense of self and individual confidence and capacity”, and aims at “undoing the effects of internalised oppression”; 2) close relationships: “where empowerment is about developing the ability to negotiate and influence the nature of the relationship and decisions made within it”; and 3) collective: “where individuals work together to achieve a more extensive impact than each could have had alone” (Rowlands, 1995, p.87). Empowerment is perceived as a tool to change the situation of marginalised individuals and groups and a process that involves some degree of personal development, which must be supported by moving from insight to action (Rowlands, 1995, p.88). This can include a wide variety of actions stemming from co-operation rather than competition (Rowlands, 1995, p.87).

Rowlands (1995, p.88) highlights the following steps of an empowerment process: “people, organisations or groups who are powerless (a) become aware of the power dynamics at work in their life context, (b) develop the skills and capacity for gaining some reasonable control over their lives, (c) exercise this control without infringing upon the rights of others, and (d) support the empowerment of others in the community. However, transformation does not occur only at individual/community levels but involves actions aiming to dismantle structural inequalities at societal levels (Batliwala, 1994; Rowlands, 1995; Kabeer, 2011; Hunt and Samman, 2016). Kabeer (2011, p.1) refers to women’s agency as citizens and their “capacity to act collectively to protest injustice, to claim their rights and to work on equal terms with men to shape society in which they live”. The awareness gained by individuals (Batliwala, 1993) is broadly similar to the concept of conscientisation proposed by Freire (1970) drawing on post-Marxist critical theory: individuals become *subjects*, i.e. not objects, (or in Sen’s terminology agents) in their own lives and develop a critical consciousness of their circumstances that leads to action (Rowlands, 1995, p.88).

Rowlands (1995, p.89) makes two other significant points in her analysis of power: outsiders cannot control an *authentic*¹⁹ empowerment process and the outcome of that process may take

¹⁹ Emphasis added by the author.

unanticipated directions. In that perspective, social change is not predetermined ('engineered') and it does not have an end state (Wallace and Porter, 2013, p.7). This recognition raises a fundamental ethical and political question over what role actors, such as development organisations, donors or governments, should play in empowerment processes (Rowlands, 1995, p.89).

The examination by Kabeer incorporates Rowlands' understanding of power and Sen's notion of freedom to make choices about one's life. In her definition, empowerment is "seen to occur at a number of different levels, to cover a range of different dimensions and to materialize through a variety of different processes", while central to "the idea of empowerment is the idea of power... and ability to make choices: to be disempowered, therefore, implies to be denied choice. The notion of empowerment...refers to the processes by which those who have been denied the ability to make choices acquire such an ability. In other words, empowerment entails a process of change" (Kabeer, 1999, p.8). In her later writing, Kabeer (2011, p.8) emphasises the importance of a specific context for stating empowerment goals, which in turn determines measurement of outcomes of a particular empowerment process.

The analyses by Molyneux (1985) and Moser (1989) made a further contribution to understanding outcomes of empowerment processes by analysing women's and gender needs. In her gender planning framework, Moser (1989, p.1803) makes the distinction between *practical and strategic* gender needs or interests. Practical gender needs refer to immediate practical needs women identify in their socially accepted roles. These do not challenge unequal power relations between women and men. *Strategic* gender needs, on the other hand, are those women identify to challenge gender inequalities they encounter in their lives. These are context-specific and aim at structural changes in power relations between women and men. Women's gender needs and interests should be understood as discursively constructed products formed within certain historical, political and cultural contexts. Molyneux (2007) further draws attention to the politics of using women's gendered needs and interests as instruments to pursue certain development objectives.

Sen drawing on the analysis of empowerment by Batliwala (1993, 1994), distinguishes two other essential aspects of power and empowerment: "control over resources (physical, human, intellectual, financial, and the self), and control over ideology (beliefs, values and attitudes) (Cornwall, 2016, p.344). Sholkamy (2010) points to the importance of an enabling environment to support women's empowerment, while Fox (2016) and Hunt and Samman (2016) highlight

the need to build broad-based alliances for empowerment. According to Sholkamy (2010, p.257), “[a]lleviating poverty and enabling women to make some income can better lives, but the enabling environment that confirms the right to work, to property, to safety, to voice, to sexuality and to freedom is not created by sewing machines or micro-credit alone.”

Ethnographic research by Guérin, Kumar and Agier (2013) on Indian microfinance groups challenges the emphasis on women as a monolithic category and the conventional polarity of *power as domination* (power over) and *power as agency* (power to/power within). It points to complexities of interpersonal relationships within a specific gender regime. Although there are many shared collective needs and interests amongst women, there are also abundant instances where women’s agency involves domination over other women (Guérin, Kumar and Agier, 2013, p. 2), such as within unequal kinship relations (e.g. mother-in-law vs. daughter-in-law) or within women’s self-help groups and other microfinance practices (Sinha, 2009; Karim, 2011). While relationships between women are often ambiguous, “where solidarity, competition and rivalry coexist”, hierarchies between women are never fixed, but permanently bargained for and negotiated (Guérin, Kumar and Agier, 2013, p.4). At the same time, solidarity and cooperation can be instrumental in helping women manage their everyday lives and responsibilities. Thus, agency is not necessarily a positive concept. Instead, it can incorporate bargaining, negotiation, deception, discouragement, manipulation, and even subordination, if a certain gain is anticipated.

Further, many women may be aware of the extent of men’s domination and women’s limited control over resources, decision making and rights, but they conceptualise their power through men, in particular their husbands and their husbands’ standing in the family and wider community (Guérin, Kumar and Agier, 2013, p.10). In addition, according Guérin, Kumar and Agier (2013, p.7), the English term empowerment is not easily accepted by grassroots women, and even microfinance staff; and instead replaced by other notions such as freedom, economic independence, equal rights or capacity to act, seizing opportunities, having freedom of movement, showing courage, and exercising responsibility.

The central contribution of the feminist writing on empowerment is the causal link between empowerment processes (at individual and collective levels) and social transformation. These processes “produce shifts in consciousness...overturning limiting normative beliefs and expectations that keep women locked into situations of subordination and dependency, challenging restrictive cultural and social norms and contesting the institutions of everyday life

that sustain inequity” (Cornwall, 2016, p.345). According to Cornwall (2016, p.344), there are three specific contributions of feminist analyses of empowerment: 1) empowerment must be about changing power relations; 2) empowerment is relational where ‘the personal and political’ intertwine; and 3) empowerment is a highly contextual and intricate process, which cannot be fully controlled. Furthermore, while the fulfilment of urgent women’s needs is essential, it is not sufficient to build capabilities (freedoms) of individuals to make *free* decisions about their lives. Shift in consciousness (Cornwall, 2016, p.345) at personal level must be followed by transformational processes tackling those groups, systems and structures that keep power relationships between women and men in imbalance.

3.3 Women's labour participation

3.3.1 Introduction

The proportion of female employees in the global (formal) economy has increased significantly since the mid-20th Century. Women are increasingly integrated at various stages of complex global value chains (Kaplinsky, 2000), although great disparities across and within regions and individual countries persist. Unemployment and underemployment are common features of women's involvement in economic activities. This is not only due to lacking adequate employment opportunities, but also due to other social and economic asymmetries between women and men (Papyrakis, Covarrubias and Verschoor, 2012; World Bank, 2013; Heath, 2014; Besamusca et al., 2015; ILO, 2017; Klasen, 2019; Rai, Brown and Ruwanpura, 2019). The global share of women over 15 years of age in paid employment has declined slightly in recent years to 46.9 per cent, down from 51 per cent in 1990 (World Bank, 2020a). Women of the Middle East and North Africa and South Asia continue to have the lowest representation in the global work force. In 2020, the average formal employment of women of a productive age in India, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Pakistan stood at 25 per cent (World Bank, 2020a).

It is important to note that women provide the bulk of work in informal (licit, unregulated) economy, including subsistence and cash agriculture and daily labour, and carry out most of unpaid household work (Franck and Olsson, 2014; Bonnet, Vanek and Chen, 2019; Gammage, Joshi and Rodgers, 2020). Moreover, women from poor and lower-class families have been integrated in labour market for centuries, albeit excluded from the majority of 'male' occupations and positions of power. Women's employment can be explained through a hierarchical employment pyramid. In addition to unpaid household-based work with the lowest market value, women can be self-employed in micro-enterprises or work as salaried workers. The latter category can further include daily labourers with irregular income, workers with short-term and temporary contracts who are often provided with limited or no employment benefits and protection. The top of the pyramid is represented by business owners and employees with a long-term contractual agreement and a remuneration package with benefits as per national labour legislation.

Employment trends in recent decades, including those specifically related to women's participation in labour markets, have been affected by global economic restructuring, demonstrated, for example, in increased privatisation of public enterprises, deregulation of labour markets, cuts in welfare services (especially during economic crises), expansion of new

technologies, and increased global economic integration of markets for goods and services, capital and labour. Various authors, such as Stiglitz (2003); Perrons (2004); Benería, Berik and Floro (2015); Piketty (2015) and Milanovic (2016), have discussed the impact of global economic inequality on certain groups and their limited benefits from global growth. In recent years, an increasing trend of automation and digitalisation of economic processes has started progressively affecting job security of lower-skilled workers, including those in developing economies. In addition, foreign direct investment, the attraction of which is a common part of national economic development, is not necessarily job intensive and beneficial for broad population groups. The dilemma between increasing productivity thanks to new technologies and the loss of jobs is particularly acute in countries with a high proportion of ‘disposable workers’, i.e. masses of workers of a productive age who can be easily replaced.

Concurrently, heightened competition forces companies to produce goods and services with the lowest possible costs putting downward pressure on wages and commonly referred to as the race to the bottom. A high growth with a high output and even employment rates may, in fact, offer low real wages for workers. In addition, export-oriented zones, created to attract foreign investors, have been often criticised for various negative externalities such as harmful impacts on the environment and health of workers, lack of safety measures, job insecurity and limited attention to welfare of employees (Obeng, Wrigley-Asante and Teye, 2015; Gunwardana, 2016; Simu et al., 2018; Anner, 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic exposed the fragility of global supply chains compounded with limited social protection of low-income workers leading to a high level of job losses (Majumdar, Shaw and Sinha, 2020).

On the other hand, the ever more interconnected world with close linkages between different levels of the global economy (Sweetman and Pearson, 2018, p.3) also increasingly means greater information sharing about the working conditions of global workers, which in turn creates pressure on local, international and multinational companies and other related institutions to improve the rights of workers. The narrative of ‘nimble fingers’ (Elson and Pearson, 1981) of young women from low-income countries producing cheap garments during long hours and earning meagre wages has become a notorious imagery in pressing the private sector to adopt higher ethical standards in the production process (Akhter, 2014; Mishra, 2014; Baumann-Pauly, D. and Labowitz, S., 2015; Rahim, 2017). In recent years, various pieces of legislation covering the protection of vulnerable workers have been introduced, for example the ILO convention no. 98 on the right to bargain collectively and convention no.177 on the rights of home-based workers, in addition to anti-discrimination tools such as the Convention

on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) and the ILO agenda of Decent Work for All as part of the Sustainable Development Goals (ILO, 2018). The Fair Trade accreditation has also expanded, along with other forms of ethical employment and trade. This accreditation promotes not only fairer wages, but also sustainable environmental practices, equal treatment of female and male workers and workers' stronger bargaining position (Hutchens, 2010; Childs, 2014). The Fair Trade brand is also one of marketing instruments to educate consumers about buying products which respect ethical business principles (Anderson, 2018).

The Fair Trade values are shared with ethical standards of co-operative and social enterprises. These not only promote collective entrepreneurship and risks-sharing among members, but also workers-members' self-reliance, care for community, and social and economic equality within enterprises and beyond (ICA, 1995; ILO 2002). Given their democratic nature, these forms of employment are also more conducive to increasing women's employment, safeguarding equal remuneration of women and men and women's access to senior level occupations, unlike in mainstream businesses, although this link is not automatic (Okwany, 2010; Ondekova, 2016).

The following sub-sections 3.3.2-3.3.3 further analyse women's participation in the (global and globalising) economy within the context of women's empowerment, poverty reduction and decent jobs.

3.3.2 Women as economic actors

The publication by Esther Boserup (1970), a Danish agricultural economist, of *Women's Role in Economic Development*, was instrumental in putting women's economic participation on the agenda of international development. According to Kabeer (2015, p. 202), "women's location at the intersection between production and reproduction, between making a living and caring for the family, makes the organisation of gender relations central to the nexus between economic growth and human development, and hence central to the development agenda". Currently, there is a broad array of institutions insisting that, "businesses should promote and support the aims of gender justice and the empowerment of women" (Sweetman and Pearson, 2018, p.1), where women's economic empowerment refers to: "...women's capacity to contribute to and benefit from economic activities on terms which recognise the value of their contribution, respect their dignity and make it possible for them to negotiate a fairer distribution of returns (Eyben, 2011, p.6, cited in Sweetman and Pearson, 2018).

For most feminist economists and other gender equality advocates, women's economic inclusion is a human right and an end in itself (Benería, 1995; Elson, 1998, 2004; Kabeer, 2009, 2012; Benería, Berik and Floro, 2015). This understanding, however, clashes with instrumentalist approaches to promoting women's participation in economic activities summarised as 'smart economics' or 'investment' into women that 'will pay off' (World Bank, 2006; Kabeer, 2013; Roberts and Zulfiqar, 2019). Regardless ideological rationales, there is a broad consensus that women's employment contributes to various positive outcomes for both women and wider society. For example, employment is positively correlated with education and facilitates gaining various occupational skills (Verick, 2014, p.7; Bussemakers et al., 2017), thus increasing societal human capital. Women's employment has been also linked with poverty reduction (Acharya, 2008; Bhat, 2011; Kiaušienė, 2015). Women's inclusion in the labour market can lead to postponing early marriage and lowering fertility rates (Budig, 2003; Bongaarts, Mensch and Blanc, 2017; Chari et al., 2017). Labour migration to urban centres offers a possibility to access a wide range of social and economic opportunities, especially for younger women in search of 'modernity' and wishing to consume modern commodities (Pun, 2005). At the same time, independent women's income can lower control of relatives over women's lives and increase women's agency to make independent decisions (Gaye and Jha, 2011; Pickbourn, 2020). On the other hand, women's economic involvement does not automatically mean positive outcomes with respect to women's social and economic equality with men (Salway et al., 2005; Kabeer, 2011; Chant, 2016; Kabeer, Mahmud and Tasneem, 2017). Despite progress that has been made in the integration of women in the global economy in recent decades, numerous barriers for gender parity in economic development persist, many of which are rooted in unequal gender roles and relations disadvantaging women in comparison with men (Kieran et al., 2015; Dasgupta, S. and Verick, 2016; Kochhar, Jain-Chandra and Newiak, 2017; Dutta, Giddings and Roy, 2019; Klasen, 2019; Borrowman and Klasen, 2020).

According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2017, covering 144 countries and published by the World Economic Forum (2017, p.10), the economic sphere is one of the two²⁰ most challenging areas demonstrating tenacious gender gaps. Given the continued widening of the economic gender gap, the 2017 Report states the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI) in this area will not be closed for another 217 years. The GGGI in economic equality is measured through the female to male ratio in labour force participation; estimated earned income; a number of

²⁰ The second one is health.

legislators, senior officials and managers; and professional and technical workers. Such overarching metrics, however, require further qualification. For instance, according to the 2017 Report, Rwanda is one of the best performing countries in the GGGI, scoring narrowly behind Finland, referencing a significant narrowing of its gap in the number of women in ministerial positions and the highest share of female parliamentarians in the world (WEF, 2017). More nuanced inquiry, however, uncovers persistent patriarchal culture permeating the Rwandan society and weak agency of the female political elite to tackle it effectively (Abbott, 2015).

Despite the global consensus that women are underprivileged in virtually every indicator in the world of work (Word Bank, 2013; International Monetary Fund, 2016), the efficiency rationale (Mayoux, 2006) continues to dominate the global discourse on women's economic rights (Mowles, 2013; Cornwall, 2016; Gerard, 2019). One reason for an instrumentalist framing of the arguments to address gender economic inequalities can be an expectation that political representatives, often male, might be more inclined to engage in reducing women's economic inequalities when a human rights perspective is downplayed, especially in countries which are less democratic and which have strong patriarchal regimes.

A number of feminist authors (Benería, 1979; 2003; Elson, 1998; Chant, 2003, 2008, 2016; Pearson, 2007; Benería, Berik and Floro, 2015; Gammage, Joshi and Rodgers, 2020) have analysed close linkages between household and the labour market operating within the framework of free market economy. Le Mare (2018, p.94) summarises this feminist focus as: "attention to the exercise of power within private spaces, such as within household and through personal relationships which also have political consequences, stressing the importance of social reproduction and consumption to the wider economy". Sweetman and Pearson (2018, p.7) note that entrepreneurship of low-income 'resourceful' women was encouraged by policymakers and planners especially during the period of austerity policies of mid-1980s and 1990s to help families and communities survive cuts in welfare and employment. This period also coincides with the spread of microfinance offered to poor women.

Micro-businesses, established through microfinance, have been, however, often high-risk ventures promoted in 'feminised' sectors yielding nominal income, negligible in terms of economic growth and contributing to household indebtedness. The myth of 'natural-born' poor entrepreneurs at the 'bottom of the pyramid' (Prahalad, 2005) has also overshadowed attention to middle-income women, who, in fact, have a much better chance to manage successful businesses (Sweetman and Pearson, 2018, p.8). These 'missing middle' female entrepreneurs

could have contributed to breaking the ‘glass ceiling’ beyond a few elite business women and contribute to normalising women as mainstream business actors. In meantime, a number of researchers have concluded that microfinance – as part of market-based solutions to eradicate poverty – has brought mixed results for women (Sinha, 2009; Hanlon, Barrientos and Hulme, 2010; Karim, 2011; Ashraf, 2014; Duvendack and MacLean, 2015; Abdo and Kerbage, 2018). Dolan, Johnstone-Luis and Scott (2018, p.38) note that “[e]xamining women’s agency is...key to identifying which aspects of market engagement may be empowering, and why”. Reflecting on research with female micro-entrepreneurs in Bangladesh, Dolan, Johnstone-Luis and Scott (2018, p.38) concluded that positive outcomes could be observed in women’s capacity to exercise their personal agency and in familial lives, however, “there [was] less immediate evidence that [these economic roles] led to collective empowerment or the capacity to effect broad-based social and political change”.

There are many other ambiguities linked to micro-entrepreneurship of poor women. For example, training of unexperienced micro-entrepreneurs with limited education can be time-consuming and very costly to reach a desired level of skills, while selected business activities can have limited market and competitive potential, as in the case of handicrafts. Business ventures can also become quickly obsolete as was experienced by Bangladesh’s Grameen phone ladies replaced by formal phone-centres (Dolan, Johnstone-Luis and Scott, 2018, p.44). There is also an ethical question over social benefits of certain products and services offered through micro-businesses. These can be desired by customers and make sense economically in a particular context, however, they are questionable with regard to social and environmental impacts; for example, the production and sale of alcohol, fast food products or unsustainable crops²¹. Further, there is no guarantee that enterprises based on ethical business principles are immune to challenges raised with respect to mainstream companies, such as with respect to neglect of women’s care responsibilities, business appropriation by men or political manipulation (Nair and Moolakkattu, 2015; Wijers, 2019). King, Sintes and Alemu (2018, p.126) also underscore that production ventures may relegate women to basic (non-influential) participation. The authors advocate identifying roles for women *beyond*²² production tasks and facilitate engagement in mixed (male and female) enterprises in traditionally ‘male’ sectors

²¹ All examples based on the author’s personal experience from livelihoods projects.

²² Emphasis in the original.

with a higher earning potential, within which women can learn skills from those men with more business acumen (King, Sintes and Alemu, 2018, p.126-127).

With respect to eradicating poverty, for feminist writers, poverty is a highly gendered experience with roots in discrimination and exclusion (Bradshaw, Chant and Linneker, 2017). There is a consensus that poverty is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon and it is not related only to lack of income and deprivation of material assets, but can also be the result of lacking social and human capital. Chambers (2006) notes that the poor are caught in a web of interconnected poverty disadvantages, which makes the process of genuine ‘graduating’ out of poverty more challenging. These disadvantages can be experienced simultaneously at various levels: at household, community and broader societal levels, within markets, or when it comes to dealing with legal, administrative and political systems. Furthermore, Rahnema (1997) and Chambers (2006) highlight that priorities in addressing poverty are identified *discursively*. Thus, what priorities and policy measures are adopted largely depends on who participates in and has influence over that discourse.

Other feminist writers, such as Hochschild and Machung (1989), Palmer (1995) and Folbre (1994, 2002), highlight unequal gender division of labour and *reproductive tax* (Palmer, 1995) as one of the key gendered causes of poverty and women’s exclusion from economic activities. Reproductive tax refers to women’s (and girls’) responsibilities to nurture and provide care in their household based on social expectation. Such work is provided primarily by women, not men. Engagement in such work then deprives women and girls of time that could be dedicated to other activities. Salazar Parreñas (2000) and Hoschchild (2000) discuss the existence of so called care chains, within which more affluent women hire poorer women to carry out part of their household tasks. Such a domestic worker is still compelled to provide this work in her own home or make alternative arrangements. Hiring a maid can be also a social status symbol for some women, however, that relationship can involve exploitation (Sen, 2015; UN Women, 2016; Kahlenberg, 2020).

Care work does not only involve crucial care for children, but also care for other family members, the elderly and the ill as well as a wide range of other household tasks. Moreover, in poor households, women’s burden is often much higher due to limited access to labour-saving technologies and basic amenities, such as supply of electricity and water (Andajani-Sutjahjo, Chirawatkul and Saito, 2015; IFAD, 2016; Standal and Winther, 2016; Grassi, Paris and Chi,

2017). Himmelweit (1999) further notes that equating care with ‘work’ obscures its personal and emotional dimensions, which resist its complete commodification in the market.

While women are required to ‘cope’ with the burden of household responsibilities, even when involved in paid work, men in general continue to avoid childcare and household work (Budlender, 2008; Barker and Pawlak, 2011; Luke, Xu and Thampi, 2014, Arraíz, 2018), even in more egalitarian countries such as Canada (Horne et al., 2018) or the United States (Scarborough, Sin and Risman, 2018). Women can also restrict men’s involvement for various reasons; for example, due to presumed or real lack of skills by men to carry such tasks effectively or as an attempt to preserve their ‘female’ nurturing responsibilities of mother and wife (Puhlman and Pasley, 2013; Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2015).

Direct and indirect labour discrimination contribute to a higher likelihood of women to be poorer in their lifetime as compared to men, including in old age (Cagatay, 1998; Van Dullemen and De Bruijn, 2015). Direct discrimination refers to actions that break existing legislative protections against discrimination, while indirect discrimination means subtle ways restricting women’s equality in labour markets, such as lack of accessible care services, gender stereotypes or prejudices against female employees. Women also tend to live longer than men and require social welfare for a longer period – lower wages (including for equal work) then means saving less for their pensions (Alksnis, Desmarais and Curtis, 2008; Tharenou, 2012; Chi and Li, 2014; Zhao and Zhao, 2018; Zveglic, Rodgers and Lavina, 2019). It is estimated that the global gender pension gap between women and men is about 30-40% (WEF, 2017). In countries with a limited welfare system, older women can depend on relatives for providing care and may experience abuse (Skirbekk and James, 2014; Nam and Lincoln, 2017; Nortey et al., 2017). Women’s vulnerability is also a factor in son’s preference in patriarchal countries due to expectations sons would provide for their elderly parents (Shah, 2005).

Chant (2003, 2008) notes that the overemphasis on women’s income inequality often associated with female household headship is misleading. *Female*-headed households do not necessarily lack male members; women that are free of male patriarch may experience more equitable redistribution of responsibilities; and many women in *male*-headed households may assume a chief breadwinning role; for example, if the husband is disabled. Furthermore, more women globally choose not to marry and/or to not have children for a variety of socio-economic reasons. According to Kabeer, Mahmud and Tasneem (2017, p.242), divorce, separation,

widowhood and female headship may be associated with greater poverty but can also mean women's greater autonomy and control over their lives.

A number of feminist economists have provided critique of unitary models of households (Grossbard, 2010, p.3), particularly, New Household Economics promoted by Becker and Mincer since the 1960s. In Becker's model, a household is a monolithic block led by a male benevolent altruist (Becker, 1965), in which all members have joint needs and it does not matter who earns income. On the other hand, Sen (1999) offered a model of household with cooperative conflict, in which members can align their interests in some respects while being in conflict about other issues. Their co-existence and survival require constant negotiations and bargaining. In patriarchal societies, women and girls tend to have a weaker bargaining position within the household which reduces their scope to have their needs and interests fulfilled. There are also hierarchical relationships of power between women, especially in extended households (Guérin, Kumar and Agier; 2013). Chant (2003, 2008) and Brickell and Chant (2010) further critique the concept of an altruistic mother, who sacrifices herself for the good of household and her children. Instead, the authors bring attention to various negative aspects related to women's excessive burden, especially when involved in both productive and reproductive work, which increases women's stress and time poverty.

Elson (1998, 2004, 2010), among others, has argued that social reproduction, provided primarily by women, is crucial for functioning production processes, for example, by providing services for workers' recuperation (e.g. providing them with food, doing their laundry and so on) and nurturing the next generation of citizens and workers. Mainstream macroeconomic policies have paid limited attention to the linkages between social reproduction, women's unpaid labour and its crucial role for productive economy. Instead, Benería (1995) argues for *humane economics* in which human needs are prioritised over efficiency and maximisation of economic growth.

Ecofeminists, such as Mies, Shiva, Maathai and many others (Molyneux and Steinberg, 1995; Friends of the Earth and C40 Cities, 2018) promote greater inclusion of women in planning economic development, which does not compromise environmental sustainability. It is broadly acknowledged that women are disproportionately affected by climate change and other environmental harms, and thus women's leadership is critical to solve the global environmental crisis (UN Women Watch, 2009). Arutyunova (2017) underscores the critical importance of continued financing of women's rights organisations in building equal and sustainable

societies; however, such funding tends to decrease, particularly during economic crises (EWL, 2012; Griffin, 2015; Grown, Addison and Tarp, 2016).

With respect to labour markets, employers often reinforce broader gender stereotypes in employment relations, such as men's assumed propensity towards certain occupations and their capacity to carry out certain tasks better (or worse) than women (Luksyte, Unsworth and Avery, 2018; Saifuddin, Dyke and Hossain, 2018; González, Cortina and Rodríguez, 2019). Although the gender roles within families have been shifting, men often remain considered as primary breadwinners, and attitude reinforced by some religious, cultural and political ideologies (Werth, 2011; Nadim, 2016; Kabeer, Mahmud and Tasneem, 2017; Koo, 2019). In socially conservative contexts, men may perceive they have a more of a moral 'right' than women to be employed (Koo, 2019).

Gender stereotypes are not at play only in socially conservative countries, though. Even in societies where the dual income-earner model is more common (earning adult partners), such as in the Western democracies, underlying gender stereotypes can be often manifested; for example, in a low proportion of women in top management positions in business and finance (WEF, 2017). As a result of gender stereotyping, women tend to be segregated to certain occupations, perceived as 'female' jobs (referred to as *horizontal* segregation), which also tend to be remunerated poorly, or worse than so-called 'male' sectors. Women also struggle against *vertical* segregation to positions with lower decision-making authority. Accessing a better position is often marred by so-called 'likeability trap' stemming from gender stereotypical perceptions of women based on 'natural' feminine traits (Seo, Huang, Seung and Han, 2017; Salin, 2020). Gender segregation in employment often follows gender biases internalised through socialisation of children in their households and as part of societal systems. For example, men globally continue to outnumber women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics as these fields are believed to be more 'suitable' for men than women (Huyer, 2015; Penner, 2015).

One perverse consequence of women's employment is the risk of increased violence in the household, gender-based and sexual violence in the workplace, or harassment when commuting, which can have fatal consequences (Biswas, 2017; Naved et al., 2018; Mazumder and Pokharel, 2019). High femicide rates are notoriously associated with countries

exemplifying patriarchal gender regimes such as Bangladesh, Mexico, India and Pakistan. Woman's employment outside of her home poses a challenge to male authority as the principal breadwinner and gives women control of their own bodies and sexuality. In such cultural settings, women must gain consent from their husband and/or other relatives to enter paid employment and can still be expected to provide care (Schoen, 2018). In addition, any activities outside the woman's household must not raise suspicion about her sexual fidelity or her purity in the case of unmarried women (Ussher et al., 2017; Sen, 2018; Arjmand and Ziari, 2020). Any such social transgressions can be used as justification for violence.

Specific vulnerabilities with respect to integration in economic activities are faced by women with disabilities (Buettgen et al., 2015; Naami, 2015; EU, 2017), internally displaced and refugee women, and migrant women (UN Women, 2016; World Bank, 2017). The intersectionality of social markers of race and gender is also at play in multiple forms of discrimination experienced by minority women in the workplace and labour markets more broadly, which can lead to disengagement with paid employment (Almquist, 1987; Combs and Milosevic, 2016). Patterns with respect to gender inequalities and labour market participation can be also transported by migration, for instance within ghettoised ethnic minorities, within which women can experience higher rates of isolation than men. With respect to Muslim migrant women, various feminist authors have been critical of the excessive attention to women's veiling instead of focusing the debate on women's equal rights as per existing legislation in destination countries (Mahmood, 2006; Heath, 2008; Eijberts and Roggeband, 2015).

The improvement of labour conditions for (and with) women would require a dramatic change in attitudes by (largely male-dominated) private sector and government institutions involved in job creation (Fox, 2016; Hunt and Samman, 2016). Women's limited political representation contributes to weaker advocacy for women's interests, while having a 'voice' does not automatically mean power to make decisions and bringing about meaningful changes (Uddin, 2006, p.145) for women. However, with increasing urbanisation, particularly younger women (and men) seek new employment opportunities in urban markets with more elastic interpretations of social and even religious norms. Urban migration offers a possibility to construct a different set of rules than previous generations. Despite the harmful impacts of urban penalty (Freudenberg, Galea and Vlahov, 2005; Rice and Rice, 2009), 'modern' urban lifestyles disrupt social norms about female work, aspirations and behaviour (Pun, 2005). Nonetheless, a fundamental question put forward by Sweetman and Pearson (2018, p.10)

remains whether “capitalism and gender equality can be harmonised...through shared work which renders businesses socially responsible and sustainable, while those working with and for them are able to make decent and dignified livelihoods”.

3.3.3 Women’s economic empowerment in development

As discussed, the efficiency approach to women’s empowerment has been rejected by many feminist scholars for downplaying women’s entitlement to equality in their own right. Instead, the focus of feminist writing is the intrinsic potential of economic empowerment to transform lives of women (and men). However, according to Mowles (2013, p.53), efficiency approaches, ‘engineering’ social development, are increasingly dominant in development practice. These can be reinforced in market and poverty alleviation paradigms, although the term ‘empowerment’ may be employed rhetorically, i.e. without actual efforts to challenge gender inequalities affecting economic justice (Abdo and Kerbage, 2018, p.65). Efficiency approaches often operate on and perpetuate gender stereotypes, while constructing women’s entrepreneurship as ‘Other’ vis-à-vis men (Marlow and Swail, 2014; Abdo and Kerbage, 2018). Brickell and Chant (2010) note that women’s participation in such economic activities is organised with an underlying notion of women’s ‘altruism’ to cover household needs, often leading to women’s neglect of their own personal needs and interests; thus resulting in women’s secondary poverty within a household.

As posited by Rowlands (1995, p.89), exclusive focus on women’s engagement in economic activities does not automatically challenge unequal power relations that keep women in situations of oppression. Experience has also demonstrated that developing women’s individual capabilities is not sufficient to significantly undermine women’s inequality with men based on structural disadvantages (Torri and Martinez, 2014; Cornwall, 2016; Dolan, Johnstone-Luis and Scott; 2018; Wu, Li and Zhang, 2019; Langworthy and Warnecke, 2020). Hence, setting appropriate empowerment goals and indicators of progress is crucial. According to some (Sen, 1999; Kabeer, 2011; Guerin, Kumar and Agier, 2013; Ahmed, 2014; Lipi; 2016), measuring empowerment outcomes should be context-specific, while indicators and objectives should be selected through a participatory democratic deliberation with individuals-agents involved (Sen, 1999). Such contextualised goals, however, can also incorporate elements of particular social, economic, cultural or political ideologies that can be harmful to women (and men).

As discussed previously, central to empowerment is an active agent who is at the forefront of development processes (Sen, 1999). Some authors, however, point out that, in reality, development is still too often ‘done for women’. In these approaches, development actors operate in ‘professional-client’ relationships (Rowlands, 1995, p.90) and proscriptive, and often too rigid, methodologies undermine genuine empowerment processes (Rowlands, 1995; Wallace and Porter, 2013; O’Neil, Domingo and Valters, 2014; Chambers; 2017). O’Neil, Domingo and Valters (2014) see a particular problem in the current donor environment, which hinders locally led and innovative feminist activism. This is exacerbated by any political commitment to women’s equal rights in many countries, particularly those countries with strong patriarchal gender regimes (O’Neil, Domingo and Valters, 2014). This can be demonstrated, for instance, by difficulties in uprooting certain discriminatory cultural or religious practices, such as dowry (White, 2017) or property discrimination (Naznin, 2014; Kieran et al., 2015). Sholkamy (2010) and Cornwall (2016) further note that even the best empowerment initiatives will not reach their goal, if those who implement them are not themselves committed to change unequal power relations.

According to Oxfam (2017, p.8), “effective economic empowerment for women occurs when women enjoy their rights to control and benefit from resources, assets, income and their own time, and when they have the ability to manage risk and improve their economic status and wellbeing”. Meaningful empowerment, however, requires a holistic approach. “[W]omen must also have the autonomy and self-belief to make changes in their own lives, including having the agency and power to organize and influence decision making, while enjoying equal rights to men and freedom from violence” (Oxfam, 2017, p.8). In that sense, “[w]omen’s economic, social, personal and political empowerment is interconnected; positive change in one dimension of women’s lives is unsustainable without progress in the others” (Oxfam, 2017, p.8). Oxfam (2017, p.8) perceives women’s empowerment to be more comprehensive than women’s economic empowerment, as “it encompasses the process towards realising a wider set of women’s political, economic and social rights”.

Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere – CARE (2019, p.13) explains its approach to women’s economic empowerment (WEE) through the concept of WEE gender transformative continuum, which incorporates five main programmatic approaches: the least desirable are gender harmful and gender neutral programmes; gender sensitive and gender responsive programmes incorporate some positive elements with respect to addressing gender inequalities; but only gender transformative programmes “actively seek to build equitable

social norms, structures, and agency as well as individual gender-equitable behaviour”. The approach by CARE (2019, p.16) advocates engaging men and boys (“beyond buy in, but as active change makers towards gender equality”), and respect the do-no-harm principle; for example, in preventing women’s excessive workload, negative perceptions, potential backlash at household and community levels, risk of gender-based violence, negative impact on women’s physical health, or other negative externalities related to women’s livelihoods. Table 3.1 provides an overview of other empowerment frameworks applied in development.

Critique of development practice, however, points out that pursuing such participatory, inclusive and empowering processes is undermined by the recent shift to bureaucratisation and managerialism within aid (Wallace and Porter, 2013; Chambers, 2017). Wallace and Porter (2013, p.3) note that lengthy transformative strategies are contradictory to the ‘value-for-money’ rationale, which often translates in the imperative of a high number of ‘beneficiaries’ and compulsory ‘scaling-up’ (Wallace and Porter, 2013, p.10). The dominant development paradigms produce a certain narrative of aid (Mosse, 2005) based on “tightly proscribed and controlled methods, reflecting a very particular form of knowledge and expertise”, such as randomised control trials. What is crucial, however, is that these methods are not employed to understand complexities of unequal power relations. They provide a reduced way of responding to the values of upwards accountability in ‘unproblematic’ terms (Mowles, 2013, p.56; Chambers, 2017).

Wallace and Porter (2013, p.4) refer to the current development practice as a perfect storm or crises²³ of development. In their view, development organisations must increasingly operate in a culture of managerialism – the doctrine privileging managers (Gulrajani, 2011, p.206-207), where “change must be first envisaged, then detailed, described, and planned for. Once implemented, projects must demonstrate the achievement of pre-set results, which must be measured and reported in quantitative terms. Change is understood as linear, logical, and controlled, following theories of change based on a cause-and-effect model”. For the evaluation of empowerment, however, qualitative, not quantitative, indicators are, self-evidently, central (Rowlands, 1995, p.90). The shift from activism within development to managerialism is particularly evident in power relations inherent in current funding distribution, where “the voices of the donor and the technical expert often outweigh the voice of programme staff”

²³ According to the authors, the plural form refers to a broad range of challenges.

(Wallace and Porter, 2013, p.4). The fear of losing funding comes with the loss of freedom to work in the ways non-governmental organisations (NGOs) choose to work (Wallace and Porter, 2013, p.5).

A highly competitive bidding process for grants under short deadlines by increasingly rival, not collaborating, NGOs blurs the line between NGOs and the private sector's behaviour. 'Quick wins', not addressing underlying constraints essential in empowerment processes, are becoming dominant (Walker, 2013, p.63). What is more, NGOs find themselves increasingly in competition for funding with private-sector 'service' providers, for whom service-client relationship and delivery under proscribed operational procedures are more natural. Neoliberal economic principles and introducing business-like practices, terminology, discipline and control into not-for-profit organisations are by now an accepted norm (Mowles, 2013, p.51; Chambers, 2017). The current language of the international aid community has been populated by references to corporate plans, business cases, value for money, growth, competitors, bids, and so on (Walker, 2013, p.69). Such language is significantly different from the emphasis on social movement, activism, human rights and justice agenda of earlier years. As noted by Chambers (2017, p.81), those entering the aid sector now are not aware what has been lost, nor appreciate how constrained development actors have become.

Without familiarity with feminist scholarship, new misconceptions and manipulations can be introduced by emerging actors, such as the private sector, in the pursuit of 'women's empowerment' that instead contribute to women's objectification and capitalist commodification of women's desire (Dhondhak, 2019). Such tokenistic feminism is further exacerbated by clipped messaging, typical of the current emphasis on social media, which reduces space for a nuanced discourse on feminist causes. Rowlands (1995, p.90) highlights that, "[the] concept of 'empowerment', if it is used precisely and deliberately, can help to focus thought, planning, and action in development. However, when its use is careless, deliberately vague, or sloganising, it risks becoming degraded and valueless".

Some of the current control practices in aid are introduced with the rationale for increased transparency and NGO efficiency (Mowles, 2013, p.58). However, this does not necessarily mean that critical evaluations, which raise difficult questions, are appreciated (Wallace and Porter, 2013, p.5). What counts as valid evidence can be contentious. The current approaches to evaluation "tend to measure what is measurable, not what is important (Wallace and Porter, 2013, p.6), or in other words, development actors "hit the target but miss the point" (Mowles,

2013, p. 53). This is while the organisations themselves self-censor conversations of their staff with donors, presumably due to fear that any critical voices may present the organisation in a negative light (Mosse, 2005; Wallace and Porter, 2013, p.17). Those, advocating ‘to do things differently’ find themselves increasingly in subaltern positions (Spivak, 1988), while those, that restrict critical voices, disregard that innovation (and evolution) often occurs through trying something new and subversive, with the risk of not knowing whether the result will be successful (Mowles, 2013, p.54).

One way how to explain these changes in development practice is through Foucault’s analysis of power and control within the Aid Chain (Wallace and Porter, 2013, p.13). A system of power and control operates discursively and defines what is ‘normal’ (Wallace and Porter, 2013, p.13). This is manifested, for example, in the spread of ‘tools’ that currently populate development practice, particularly when they are embraced by high-profile donors, such as the UK’s Department for International Development. Such mechanistic approaches endorsed in the name of efficiency and rigour, however, may limit and distort learning (Chambers, 2017, p.57).

The persistence of dominant systems in development practice is not the result of false consciousness by development actors, but an acknowledged and self-limiting action (Scott-Smith, 2013, p.110). In this view, development actors have accepted the disconnection between what is said and what is done (Scott-Smith, 2013, p.112). NGOs and professionals in the aid sector are conscious that they cannot survive, if they do not comply with the rules set by those with power over funding (Harding, 2013, p.133). The imperative to raise funds has become the central focus and driving force behind decision-making (Walker, 2013, p.61), while speaking the truth to funders carries the risk of losing future grants (Chambers, 2017, p.78). This grants-driven environment greatly constrains the ability of NGOs and other development actors to work strategically and responsibly (Walker, 2013, p.62).

While NGOs are increasingly employing fundraisers, grants’ managers and other lobbyists to adapt to the grants-driven culture, commitments to transformative feminist agenda tend to evaporate quickly, despite the global rhetoric on women’s rights (Walker, 2013, p.67). Social activism involved in addressing feminist causes has been hijacked by guidelines, checklists and manuals on ‘how to do gender’ within the framework of neoliberal capitalism (Fraser, 2013). These tools are often produced in English and can be too complicated for field staff to follow and are thus used by ‘experts’ with the understanding of specific jargon and techniques. Thus

while NGOs have the potential to contribute to women's empowerment, they are not agents of empowerment by definition (Staudt, 2002, p.102).

Mowles (2013, p.51) points out that the simplification of complex realities and intricate challenges, such as gender inequalities, are presented in simplified terms to be understood by bureaucrats, who are often distanced from everyday realities. It is not surprising that, without sufficient scope for variation, contestation and change, these 'grand schemes' often become totalitarian and devoid of meaning and fail to bring about meaningful change. As Mowles (2013, p.58) explains, "[t]he future is not contained in the present, and social development is not a 'problem' to be solved. There is always a variety of possible choices and each choice will lead to its own consequences, its own strengths and weaknesses, and its own successes and failures, depending on whom you ask". As summarised by Walker (2013, p.71), the current development culture is full of contradictions, cynicism and hypocrisy and require a long overdue critical reflection and change.

In his recent book, Chambers (2017) discusses self-critical reflexivity and the rejection of dogmatic approaches to knowledge that have permeated development theory and practice that gloss over the 'messiness' of reality (Wallace and Porter, 2013, p.7). Restrictions of open and egalitarian production of knowledge can occur in many forms; e.g. as strategic ignorance of heretic and discordant information; through career discrimination and even termination of contracts of those with opposing views; indoctrination in place of education; maintaining institutional silos and tunnel vision; focusing on professional and personal preferences while ignoring other critical areas of expertise (Chambers, 2017, p.9). Instead, Chambers (2017, p.120) advocates limiting Newtonian practice and its excessive focus on controllable things in knowledge production, and to increase acceptance of pluralism in knowledge, grounded realism and social complexity. According to Chamber (2017, p. 149), the 21st Century, with its accelerating unforeseeable changes, demands epistemological, behavioural, and experimental transformations carried out through seeking synergies of vocabulary and concepts; participatory ground-truthing; behaviours, attitudes, and relationships of good facilitation; critical reflection and reflexivity; and principles, values, commitment, and energy. There are multiple locations within which such radical change can be pursued; for example, in challenging and changing obstructive convention; upending procedures and cultures which hinder not promote development; committing oneself to knowing better; and forming alliances of the like-minded.

Table 3.1: Overview of selected empowerment frameworks

Kabeer (2009): Dimensions of empowerment	Kabeer (2011): Measurable changes of empowerment	Kabeer (2011): Key factors of enabling environment for empowerment	Golla et al. (2011): Measurable changes of empowerment
- Building women's human capital and capabilities - Redistributing reproductive responsibilities through labour saving technologies, care facilities and strengthening the caring role of fathers - Ensuring women's equal property rights - Mainstreaming women into the financial system - Promoting social protection in times of crisis	- In household decision-making - In interpersonal relations - In community participation - Shifts in individual and collective forms of political agency	- Level of community openness to social progressiveness - Level of infrastructure - Market access - Communication and information networks - Support in dealing with women's reproductive responsibilities and unpaid work	- Within individuals (capability, knowledge and self-esteem) - In communities and institutions (including norms and behaviour) - In markets and value chains - In the wider political and legal environment
Hunt and Samman (2016): Key aspects to enhance enabling environment for empowerment	Jones (2016): Non-negotiable dimensions of women's economic empowerment in Market System Development	Oxfam (2017): Five principles of a comprehensive framework for women's economic empowerment	CARE (2019): Integrated approach based on three conditions, men's involvement and 'do-no-harm' principle
- Education, skills development and training - Quality, decent paid work - Unpaid care and work burdens - Property, assets and financial services - Collective action and leadership - Social protection - Labour market characteristics - Fiscal policy - Legal, regulatory and policy framework - Gender norms and discriminatory social norms	- Economic advancement – increased income and return on labour - Access to opportunities and life chances such as skills development or job openings (Access Dimension 1) - Access to assets, services and needed supports to advance economically (Access Dimension 2) - Decision-making authority in different spheres including household finances (Agency Dimension 1) - Manageable women's workloads (Agency Dimension 2)	- Increase the voice of women in the household, in communities, in economic institutions and in political spaces - Take a systems approach to remove the barriers to realising women's economic rights - Harness multiple entry points to ensure meaningful WEE and support women's empowerment more broadly - Build partnerships that embed ownership in local systems - Strengthen internal capacity to ensure programme quality	- Increased capabilities - Increased decision-making power - Increased enabling environment

3.4 Men, masculinities and the relationship to gender (in)equality

3.4.1 Introduction

Development discourse has been rather slow in articulating men's roles in transforming unequal gender relations. The Men in Development (MID) approach is an attempt to fill that void and 'man-stream' Gender and Development strategies (Chant and Gutmann, 2000). MID received larger recognition in the late 20th and the early 21st Centuries, following the expansion of Men's Studies in the 1970s (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p.831) and their consolidation into an academic field in the 1980s and 1990s (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p.833).

MID and Men's Studies stem from a conceptual analysis of the Gramscian notion of hegemonic masculinity and other concepts related to the exploration of masculinities. The analysis of hegemonic masculinity draws on multidisciplinary investigation and itself has impacted a number of other disciplines – in addition to gender and development studies, it has also been used in sociology, psychology, law, geography, criminology and organisation studies, among others, while also finding its way into popular discourse (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p.833-834).

Men's studies explore a broad range of topics, often related to the loss of men's human capital, impact of women's emancipation on men, fatherhood, and men's risky practices such as alcoholism, violence or engaging in unprotected sex (Chant and Gutmann, 2000; UNDAW, 2008, p.6; Jewkes et al., 2015, p.115). The core contribution of MID, however, is in the realisation that men have also been victims of gender inequality and have specific concerns. These might not be adequately addressed, if the focus is only on men as perpetrators of gender inequality (Chant and Gutmann, 2000; Connell, 2005; Farré, 2011; Jewkes et al., 2015). Yet, the inclusion of men in gender equality strategies should not be done at the expense of achieving women's equality with men. According to MID, men should play an essential role in the struggle for an equitable social order and equality with women in all walks of life. At the same time, men should not weaken the authority of women in the policy arena addressing gender inequality (Connell, 2005, p.1807). Furthermore, involving men does not mean ignoring a "variety of exploitative, abusive, and coercive actions from men", but "rather attempting to situate them within the social and discursive conditions and frameworks that either foster or discourage such behaviour" (Segal, 1993, p.638).

In earlier feminist theories, in which gender was analysed almost exclusively by conflating gender with women, there is a similar exclusionary tendency in Men's Studies to pursue analysis of masculinities as a separate sphere, "focusing on men and relations among men" only "as if women were not a relevant part of the analysis" (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p.837). As discussed by Kandiyoti (1988), women are both complicit and resistant in maintaining patriarchal gender order, thus, both women and men need to be involved in dismantling masculinities and femininities that perpetuate gender inequalities and structures that sustain them.

The following sub-sections first examine the various concepts and theories in understanding gender and gender normativity (Section 3.4.2), including the concepts of hegemonic masculinity and masculinities (Section 3.4.3). Section 3.4.4 explores the linkages amongst men, masculinities and men's roles in working towards gender equality. The overview of the theoretical framework concludes with an exploration of the notions of Islamic and Muslim masculinities in the frame of feminist critique.

3.4.2 Theorising gender

Masculine and feminine genders are often understood as social categories formed through socialisation – to paraphrase De Beauvoir (1949), one is not born a woman (or a man), but rather *becomes* one. Socialising processes are underpinned by a normative interplay of power relations vested in various social institutions of given societal arrangements. Gender socialisation occurs in many spaces; for instance, in households, as part of peer interactions, in school, workplace, mosque, or through media, contributing to reinforcement of gender norms ascribed to particular genders. Gender norms are "standards and expectations to which women and men generally conform, within a range that defines a particular society, culture and community at that point in time" (EIGE, 2018). Gender norms not only guide one's behaviour throughout his or her lifetime based on particular expectations but can also restrict one's freedoms to choose how to live life. In turn, gender stereotypes are generalised and widely held "views or preconceptions about attributes or characteristics, or the roles that are or ought to be possessed by, or performed by women and men", often combined with stereotypes based on race, age, economic status and so on (OHCHR, 2020). Gender stereotyping often leads to harmful consequences; for instance, the failure to criminalise marital rape based on a societal perception of women as the sexual property of men, or the failure to effectively investigate, prosecute and sentence sexual violence against women due to reasoning that women should

protect themselves from sexual violence by dressing and behaving modestly (OHCHR, 2020). As highlighted by Butler (2007, p.190), “gender is a performance with clearly punitive consequences”, if gender boundaries are overstepped.

The notion of normative gender, according to Butler (2007, p. xxi), can apply to at least two specific meanings: first, it can refer to “the norms that govern gender” or second, it can describe “ethical justification, how [gender] is established, and what concrete consequences proceed” from it. Butler (2007, p. xxii) further distinguishes a *descriptive* account of gender which offers explanations of what makes gender intelligible, whereas a *normative* account contends with the questions of “which expressions of gender are acceptable, and which are not”. For Butler (2007, p. xxiv), and other feminist theorists, the exploration of what gender is, how it is produced and reproduced, and what its possibilities are, is the fundamental question for political revolution of shifting gender relations away from patriarchal heteronormative domination, which takes the privileged heterosexual masculine as a norm or an unmarked standard, while the feminine is positioned as the inferior ‘Other’, a marked derivative of the (heterosexual) masculine.

Various feminist theorists have been critical of essentialism in accounts of masculinity and femininity. MacCormack and Strathern (1980) point out that nature is regularly associated with the feminine, while culture is invariably represented as male, active, and abstract (Butler, 2007, p.50). The association of femininity with the body appeared, for example, in the views of education pioneer Maria Montessori claiming women’s ‘superior capacity’ for affection and maintaining honour and moral standards (Cranny-Frances et al., 2003, p.2). In turn, the mind has often been associated with masculinity (Butler, 2007, p.17), as demonstrated throughout the history of Western philosophical canon (Witt and Shapiro, 2015). Further, for Beauvoir and Wittig, the conflation of women with sex and the ostensibly sexualised features of their bodies is the reason why men resist women’s freedom and autonomy; particularly as the female body is “purportedly enjoyed by men” (Butler, 2007, p.27).

To analyse gender relations between the masculine and the feminine, feminist inquiry often turns to the analysis of patriarchy. The notion of patriarchy is borrowed from anthropology and the analysis of kinship relations, in which the eldest man, father or patriarch, has authority over other subordinated men and women. Patriarchy cuts across religious boundaries; it is manifested in Hinduism, Confucianism, Islam as well as various Christian denominations (Kandiyoti, 1988, p.278; Klingorová and Havlíček, 2015; Fisher and Naidoo, 2016). Caldwell (1978) coined the idea of the patriarchal belt referring to the regions of North Africa, Middle

East, China and South Asia. The concept of patriarchy has replaced the earlier uses of sexism in an effort to emphasise the role of institutions in production and reproduction of unequal gender relations, as opposed to individual prejudice against women (Cranny-Francis et al., 2003, p.14). Sexism is understood as a systematic discrimination against women or use of gender stereotypes against women that put them in a disadvantaged position with respect to men. It differs from the term misogyny denoting atavistic hatred of women, prejudices against women and men's emotional responses, such as contempt, and, in extreme cases, justifications of violence against women. In early feminist analyses the reference to patriarchy was used strategically to highlight men's dominance over women in the private (household) and public (work, politics, culture) spheres; however, later it was used to bring attention to "systematic structural differences in the cultural, economic and social position of men in relations to women" (Cranny-Francis et al., 2003, p.15). Kandiyoti (1988, p.278-279) explains classic patriarchy as follows:

"Under classic patriarchy, girls are given away in marriage at a very young age into household headed by their husband's father. There, they are subordinate not only to all the men but also to the more senior women, especially their mother-in-law...The young bride enters her husband's household as an effectively dispossessed individual who can establish her place in the patriline only by producing male offspring".

In classic patriarchy, women's internalisation of patriarchal norms and their own deprivation is compensated by the arrival of a daughter-in-law and having power to control her, while ensuring life-long loyalty of the sons (Kandiyoti, 1988, p.279). Importantly, when classic patriarchy is breaking down, women may turn to passive resistance and claim their part in patriarchal bargain – i.e. "protection in exchange for submission and propriety"; for example, practising more conservative veiling (Kandiyoti, 1988, p.283). According to Kandiyoti (1988, p.285), employing a more narrowly defined concept of patriarchal bargain, rather than a broader notion of patriarchy, is more useful in gender analyses:

"Systematic analysis of women's strategies and coping mechanisms can help capture the nature of patriarchal systems in their cultural, class specific, and temporal concreteness and reveal how men and women resist, accommodate, adapt, and conflict with each other over resources, rights, and responsibilities...Women's strategies are always played out in the context of identifiable patriarchal bargains that act as implicit scripts that define, limit, and inflect their market and domestic options".

Over the years, a number of other feminist contestations challenged the term patriarchy due to its proclaimed universality (Butler, 2007, p.48), monolithic construction of masculinity in the patriarchal belt, failure to account for diversity in power relations and cultural contexts, and lack of recognition of active or passive resistance to patriarchy whether by women or men (Kandiyoti, 1988, p.274-275). Butler (2007, p.49) further notes that *the law of patriarchy* is based on some imaginary idealist pre-historical narrative, that serves to legitimate the present state of the law and location of women within patriarchal relations.

In recent scholarship, patriarchy has been replaced by the concept of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1985), which is examined in more detail in Sub-section 3.4.3. Patriarchy, as an analytical concept, is, however, still widely used in feminist and development discourses. Both patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity point to structural gendered differences in power and authority, allowing for a further analysis of gender relations that challenges gender inequality (Cranny-Frances et al., 2003, p.17).

Several other feminist concepts are relevant for a feminist analysis of gender relations; particularly, the concepts of the feminine and the masculine (Irigaray, 1985), as the universal binary based on a hierarchical relationship between two rigid gender categories, politics of heteronormativity and heterosexual contract discussed by Wittig (Whatling, 1997). Rubin (1975) proposed the sex/gender system claiming that human subjects do not emerge as gendered only through kinship relations based on prohibition of incest, as proposed by Lévi-Strauss, but also through prohibition of homosexuality, i.e. through subjugation to heterosexual imperative (Rubin, 1984; Butler, 2007, p.154-156). In post-structuralist analyses (Bailey, 1993), the body is not a natural given, but it is *made* through discursive power relations – even a supposedly biological category of sex is socially constructed through historically specific modes of sexuality (Foucault, 1978; Rubin, 1984). As noted by Butler (2007, p.11), “not biology, but culture, becomes destiny”.

In the highly influential theory of performativity, “gender is not a noun, but neither is it a set of free-floating attributes. [T]he substantive effect of gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence... In this sense, gender is always a doing”, not a being (Butler, 2007, p.34). Gender understood as *act* requires a set of repeated acts with the aim of maintaining gender within its binary frame, i.e. these acts consolidate the subject (Butler, 2007, p.191). Performative theory differs radically from a spectrum of feminist literature that assumes there is always a doer behind the deed implying the existence of

independent agency and its critical role in transformation of gender inequalities (Butler, 2007, p.34). According to Butler (2007, p.195), the doer is constructed through the (repeated) deed; thus, agency is also “located within the *possibility*²⁴ of a variation on that repetition” (Butler, 2007, p.198). A critical task for feminism is to understand agency as culturally located and intelligible in particular context (Butler, 2007, p.201). Hence, “there is no possibility of agency or reality outside of the discursive practise...the task is not whether to repeat, but how to repeat or, indeed, to repeat and, through a radical proliferation of gender, to *displace* the very gender norms that enable the repetition itself” (Butler, 2007, p.202-203).

Butler (2007, p.4) further notes that “gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts...[It] intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities”. Femininity and masculinity is *fragmented*; therefore, it is more correct to refer to femininities and masculinities (Butler, 2007, p.20). As gender, these categories are not necessarily governed by strict binary opposition. For instance, non-white ethnicities are not always in an inferior position with respect to Whiteness, while in certain contexts homosexual identity can be celebrated. However, while gender norms defining femininity and masculinity can differ in various cultural contexts, cultural intelligibility of these norms is crucial for functioning of a particular *gender order* (Matthews, 1984) and its matrix of intelligibility including intelligible genders that demonstrate coherence and continuity among sex, gender, sexual practice, and desire (Butler, 2007, p.23-24). In this regard, the politics of representation of women and men, in the sense of how men and women are portrayed and perceived in a public discourse, is also a crucial part of feminist inquiry.

Section 3.4.3 provides further details on understanding of the concept of hegemonic masculinity and masculinities. Their relevance for the discourse on gender equality is discussed in Section 3.4.4. Section 3.4.4 narrows the analytical scope to the discussion on Islam, masculinity and gender equality.

²⁴ Emphasis added by the author.

3.4.3 Understanding masculinities

The concept of hegemonic masculinity was introduced by Connell (1985), one of the key theorists of men's studies and an established authority on the subject of masculinities. The concept emerged from a study of social inequality in Australian high schools and a series of debates on men's roles in Australian labour politics (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 829). In her analysis, Connell drew on feminist theories of patriarchy and men's roles in its transformation (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 831), and various studies involving life-history methodology (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p.843), which added ethnographic realism to academic analyses of the complexity of gender construction of men (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p.832).

Hegemonic masculinity refers to idealised and dominant normative masculinity which induces men to accommodate their behaviour in accordance with the key characteristics of this 'correct' model of masculinity – or “currently most honoured way of being a man” (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p.832). By failing to follow this normative behaviour, men can risk being ridiculed, ostracised or even threatened by violence, as in the case of homosexual men in some contexts. In its origins, hegemonic masculinity was conceptualised as hierarchically superior to other masculinities. However, there can be more than one hegemonic masculinity, while other masculinities are not separated from hegemonic masculinity(ies), but emerge out of relations with it/them (Jewkes et al., 2015, p.114). A weaker version of hegemonic masculinity, that still allow men to benefit from it, can be referred to as complicit masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p.832). Hegemonic masculinity is not perpetuated through violence but its spread may be supported by coercive means; for example, through specific institutions or ideologies (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p.832). Moreover, the representatives of dominant masculinities can act as social agents, supporting the adoption of certain types of masculinities (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p.839); such as popular Bollywood actors or protagonists of K-pop in South Asia and South-East Asia respectively.

Further, masculinity, as femininity, is an abstract notion and it does not represent a certain type of men, but “rather a way that men position themselves through discursive practice” (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p.841). As a discursive product, masculinity is fluid and dynamic and can thus take multiple forms – hence, it is more correct to refer to masculinities, rather than masculinity. Furthermore, masculinities are not defined only by men's power over women, but are impacted by other intersecting categories (Hearn, 2004; Beasley, 2008; Christensen and Jensen, 2014) including sexuality, age, race, class, region, disability, religious beliefs, and so

on. As explained by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005, p.836), “[m]asculinities are configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action and, therefore, can differ according to the gender relations in particular social setting”. Jewkes et al. (2015, p.113) further note:

“[Masculinities] may also be seen as positions that are occupied situationally, in that the position occupied, practices and values espoused in one context may be different from those of another. A core element of the construction of hegemonic masculinity is heterosexuality, and to a greater or lesser extent hegemonic masculinity is constructed as a gender position that is as much ‘not gay’ as it is ‘not female’”.

In more recent discourse, however, the notion of hegemonic masculinity refers also to masculinities that are supportive of gender equality, i.e., hegemonic masculinities can be ‘positive’ or ‘negative’ with respect to their position to gender equality. Crucially, a number of scholars emphasise that men have a choice, albeit constrained, to “occupy oppressive positions vis-à-vis women and other men or to resist these. ... [I]n this respect [this choice] presents itself as a target for change by gender activists” (Jewkes et al., 2015, p.113). Importantly, pursuing positive hegemonic masculinities is a key strategy to address unequal gender relations, including those between women and men (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p.853). Almassi (2015) proposes allyship masculinities as open-ended feminist approaches to manhood. He rejects feminist masculinity by hooks (1984, 1998) as an alternative to patriarchal dominance rebuilt on love, integrity, and mutuality; and democratic manhood by Kimmel (1996) that opposes traditional ‘immature’ masculinities. According to Almassi (2015, p.2), these models risk collapsing into androgyny or erasure of some men’s identities and experiences.

As noted, hegemonic masculinity should not be conflated with negative masculinity manifestations, including the term toxic masculinity, which refers to men’s adoption of certain toxic practices and views, which can be often harmful to men themselves and involve elements of misogyny. Jewkes et al. (2015, p.114) note there are many reasons why men commit violent acts (e.g. due to childhood experiences, peer pressure, social norms within gender regimes), while men’s violence and sexism may be, but are not necessarily, hegemonic in a given culture (Messerschmidt, 2012). Certain alternative / counter-hegemonic masculinities can, however, arise in direct protest against dominant masculinities – these could also be supportive of or resisting gender equality. Korean flowerboys, for example, represent soft masculinity, which

is in direct opposition to earlier tough-guy masculinities. The gentlemen's club in Erbil, Iraq emerged in direct confrontation with hypermasculinity of Islamic fundamentalism of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). The club members and men inspired by this group demonstrate their particularity through an English gentleman-like dress code and don in-vogue haircuts. However, their facial hair styles evoke conservative Muslim men. Specific physical appearance is accentuated by progressive statements with respect to a lifestyle, women's equality and environmental protection. In addition, the membership in the club does not mean rejection of faith (Islam) and men's loyalty to their ethnicity (Kurdish). From this point of view, the club members demonstrate hybrid masculinity (Bridges and Pascoe, 2014) as part of the overall gender order in a given location (Matthews, 1984; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Butler, 2007).

Further, as in the representation of femininities, representations of masculinities and how male bodies are used in such representations are critical in the analysis of men's subjectivities. For instance, a specific masculine embodiment of Muslim men arose in the post-9/11 environment. It was based on negative portrayals of Muslims, their specific appearance and manipulations of their sexuality. Such representation of Muslim men was in clear opposition to the representation of Western 'liberal' masculinities. However, men's bodies (as women's) are not always passive objects of social construction; they are also actively engaged in those social processes, as illustrated by the example of the Iraqi gentlemen's club or Korean flowerboys. It should be noted, however, that such active self-representation is also a discursive product embedded in power relations and impacted by conscious and unconscious masculinity positionings, in line with performative agency discussed by Butler (2007).

Concerning men's resistance, Ratele (2015, p.146-147) distinguishes several forms – for instance, resistance can occur collectively or be an act of an individual. Further, it can aim to resist oppressive structures, institutions, and practices of masculinities that enable or reinforce oppression. However, resistance, can also work in the opposite direction – men can resist progressive changes in gender relations; for example, stopping certain cultural practices (e.g. child marriage, dowry, female genital mutilation). Men's unwillingness to change such practices might not be motivated only by the goal of preserving one's 'culture', but it can also have roots in structural inequalities, such as poverty, conflict, weak governance and inconsistent law enforcement (Falb et al., 2014; Strier et al. 2014; Yun, 2018; Sen, Kaur and Zabaliūtė, 2020). Individual viewpoints are often reinforced or stimulated by organisational culture, the changing of which is one of the most challenging tasks; especially when

organisations are ruled by a rigid framework of ‘tradition’, such as within religious institutions (Hughes, 2017) or the military (Richard and Molloy, 2020). In his analysis of resistance, defined as social and psychological opposition to strategies aiming to challenge existing unequal gender relations and those hegemonic forms of masculinity that refute gender equality, Ratele (2015, p.146) points to gaps in feminist scrutiny of diverse forms of men’s resistance to gender equality. In his view, in order to make progress in the transformation of unequal gender relations, it is crucial to “learn that our engagements with boys and men will be characterised by dynamics, contradictions and contestations” (Ratele, 2015, p.146). This includes, but is not limited to, understanding men’s loyalty to hegemonic masculinity that injures them (Ratele, 2015, p.148).

Recent years have brought many new forms of men’s resistance to continuous struggle for gender equality; for instance, in the form of men’s associations aiming to ‘reclaim’ their rights in the face of women’s emancipation, and various other forms of men’s social and political extremism, which advocate maintenance or return to patriarchal gender relations. Anti-equality positions can be demonstrated by adopting hyper-masculine self-representation, as is the case of the Night Wolves, a Russian motorcycle club with chapters in various European countries. The club is openly homophobic, bans women’s membership and maintains anti-democratic political convictions. Similar embodiment of hyper-masculinity can be observed in a British Asian youth subculture of rudeboys that emerged against the backdrop of increased racism after the 7/7 terrorist attacks in London (Chakraborty, 2014, p.418). The recent book by Bates (2020), *Men who Hate Women*, traces the roots of extreme misogyny in various current men’s movements, bolstered by social media.

These new men’s positions have emerged in new arenas, requiring new feminist responses; for instance, with respect to the expansion of cyberspace, mobiles and other forms of new technology (Allen, 2000; Gumbus and Meglich, 2013; Hall and Hearn, 2018; Henry and Powell, 2015; Bhandari, 2019); male body, aging and health (Shuttleworth, Wedgewood and Wilson, 2012; Shirani, 2013; Garussi, Dolatabad and Garousi, 2017); effects of free-market economy and political crisis (Chakraborty, 2014); as well as migration, displacement and humanitarian crises (Pande, 2017; Okeke-Ihejirika and Salami, 2018; Turner, 2019). As noted by Connell (2005, p.1805), “[t]he old-style ethnographic research that located gender patterns purely in a local context is inadequate to the reality”, if historical perspectives and transnational processes impacting the construction of gender norms are not incorporated”. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005, p.849) recommend that research on masculinities should reflect at least

three interconnected levels: i) local, including interactions in families, organisations and immediate communities, for instance using methods of ethnography and life-history research; ii) regional at the level of the culture(s)²⁵ or nation-state as found in discursive, political and demographic research; and iii) global level analysis referring to transnational arenas such as global politics, transnational business and media.

3.4.4 Men, masculinities and gender equality

According to UNDAW (2008, p.5), “[w]orking for justice and equality in gender relations should be understood as part of the broader effort to secure equality in social relations. The maintenance of an unequal gender order in societies has negative consequences or costs for men as well as women”. Connell (2005, p.1802) highlights that men, and specific groups of men, control most of the resources required to achieve progress in women’s claims for justice. Thus, men and boys can be considered gatekeepers in efforts working towards gender equality. Yet, men’s responses to feminism(s) globally have not been positive, although in various regions progressive changes have been underway; for instance, with respect to fatherhood, particularly in Northern Europe, normalising the notion of caring fathers involved in their families (Johansson, 2011; Hanlon, 2012; Browne, 2013).

Presently, more men in influential positions also speak out in support of gender equality; for example, Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada and Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London featured among the Top 20 most influential persons in gender equality policy (Modern Diplomacy, 2018). Outside Western democracies, among others, Ziauddin Yousafzai, the father of the Nobel Laureate, Malala Yousafzai, and a co-founder of the Malala Fund recently stated: “The big question is for us – the men. We need to defeat the patriarchal thinking in our minds. We should dare to speak up when women are not given equal opportunities. We should dare to stand up when our female colleagues are not equally paid for doing the same job and the same work we do” (Malala Fund, 2019). Mr Yousafzai recently received a Promundo Future of Manhood award for his work on girls’ empowerment in education (Promundo, 2018). Since its founding in 1997 in Brazil, Promundo has worked in collaboration with partners to advance gender equality and prevent violence in over forty countries around the world (Promundo, 2020). Despite this progress, Ratele (2015) argues that for many men,

²⁵ Plural added by the author in recognition of a possible cultural diversity.

especially outside Western countries, support for gender equality remains abstract and does not necessarily translate in men's behavioural changes and pro-active stance against women's inequalities with men.

As noted previously, men continue to be perceived as a background category in practical policy interventions on gender equality (Connell, 2005, p.1806; Ratele, 2015, p.145), frequently framed as perpetrators, a problem or power holders (Connell, 2005, p.1806). Lack of 'men-streaming' in working towards gender equality, in turn, contributes to the emergence of negative men's responses, such as ridiculing women and men with feminist views or establishing extremist fathers' rights groups and other forms of backlash that accuse feminism(s) of injustice against men (Bates, 2020). Men's active resistance to giving up power is especially visible in the sites of significant men's influence, such as national political bodies and high-level executive power in large corporations. For example, only seven per cent of Chief Executive Officers in the FTSE list of 100 UK companies were women as of June 2019 (Statista, 2020). A higher representation of women, however, does not mean automatic change in exclusive masculine cultures nor the significant reduction of patriarchy.

It is often argued that men resist the transformation of gender inequalities due to fear of losing their unearned patriarchal privileges (Connell, 2005, p.1808; Pease, 2014, p.22). In general, resistance among older men tends to be much stronger than in younger generations (Connell, 2005, p.1810; Hasan, Aggleton and Persson, 2018). Older men might still hold openly sexist views prevalent in their earlier years, as illustrated by the President of the United States, Donald Trump. However, it is important to note that President Trump's sexist attitudes and behaviour are actively enabled by his (much younger) immediate family members; specifically, his wife Melania Trump as well as Ivanka Trump, Donald Trump's daughter. Essentialist views on the 'natural' character of men, such as those expressed by Melania Trump in her 'boys will be boys' comment (CNN, 2016) are often apologetic for sexual abuse and gender-based discrimination. According to Faludi (2020), however, President Trump is not representative of old-school masculinity, but "he-man specifically engineered for our image-based, sensation-saturated times". Connell (2005, p.1811) notes "it is a mistake to regard [sexist and homophobic] ideas as simply outmoded. They may be actively modernised and renewed". Pease (2014, p.23) further points out that challenging men's privileges evokes strong emotions by men (and women) – as has been witnessed throughout the history of women's equality struggle; and recently with respect to the Time's Up movement, that denounces sexual predatory behaviour by men in power.

On the other hand, less attention has been paid to negative aspects of men's privilege (Poudyal, 2000, p.77) or what Connell (2005, p.1809) refers to as "the conditions of men's advantages"; for instance, with respect to stress to perform the role of a breadwinner and to project economic success, pursuit of which can not only lead to alienation with men's family due to long working hours, but can also result in negative coping strategies such as drug abuse and reduction of men's life-span (Cheng et al., 2012; Hansen, 2012). In addition to 'having money', demonstrating men's sexual successes is another masculinity trait commonly featured in descriptions of some hegemonic masculinities. Such overt masculine sexual desire can, however, lead to various harmful consequences, as illustrated by a highly publicised case of an American actor Charlie Sheen, who had recently contracted the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) due to his risky sexual behaviour (Today, 2015). Men's promiscuity is not detrimental to men's health only, but sexually transmitted diseases can be passed on to men's sexual partners and their children. Furthermore, those men that receive most benefits from patriarchal dividend (Connell, 1987) are often not the same as those who suffer the most cost for it; for instance, with respect to military conflicts and global economic inequality (Connell, 2005, p.1809). In this sense, these disadvantaged groups of men may share more strategic interests with women than with men who oppressed them (Connell, 2005, p.1809). On the other hand, as warned by Silberschmidt (2011, p.99), poor, embattled, and frustrated men may perceive their priorities very differently and might not feel enthusiasm for engaging in gender equality work, when their own physical and material safety is not secured.

Pease (2014, p.21) distinguishes between the institutionalised patriarchal system, enabling men to enjoy structural advantages and privileges, and the personal patriarchal system, involving men's interactions with women at home and in the public sphere. In his view, as all men are socialised in some degree of patriarchy, they all believe they have some level of normative claim over women. Men's specific location within a given gender order determines the level of power and control men wield (Pease, 2014, p.21). Men may also often deny their privileges over women; however, lack of awareness of such privilege is its key aspect (Connell, 2005; Pease, 2006). As noted, there is a number of, often interconnected, ideologies that justify men's supremacy over women (and against non-heterosexual identities) on the grounds of religion, biology, cultural tradition or their organisational mission.

A Jordanian Chastity Society, associated with the Muslim Brotherhood, that aims to prepare young Muslim men and women for marriage, is an example of how an essentialist patriarchal and homophobic doctrine incorporates contemporaneous global discourses on gender and

sexuality (Hughes, 2017, p.268). The Society uses simplistic conservative explanations of the biomedical model of human sexual dimorphism, referring to normative sex organs, combined with references to men's physical power, size and strength to justify men's superiority (Hughes, 2017, p.274). These notions are underpinned by essentialist interpretations of women's rights in Islam and representing Western civilisation as 'radical' and 'extremist' (Hughes, 2017, p.271). Yet, some studies suggest social conservatism can, in fact, lead to increased desire for illicit sexual behaviour, such as searching for sexually explicit material on the Internet and an increased sexual harassment of women (Nahar, Van Reeuwijk and Reis, 2013; MacInnis and Hodson, 2014; Quddus, 2015). Hughes (2017, p.281) further notes that male Islamic authority in the Chastity Society's interpretation rests on the notion that women must be protected from excessive masculine sexuality. This is in contradiction to the essentialist representation of (Muslim) men as rational, while (Muslim and non-Muslim) women are depicted as emotional. These stereotypes are often used to bar women from certain jobs or activities (such as driving). In the Chastity Society' (contradictory) 'logic', however, men cannot control their sexuality. This requires women's *rational* strategies to resist masculine virility; for example, by controlling their behaviour towards men, modifying their physical appearance or avoiding men altogether.

In that vein, a critical question for the transformation of gender inequality is whether men are willing to give up their patriarchal dividend (Connell, 2005) and patriarchal interests (Flood, 2005), and under what conditions. Pease (2014, p.19) asks: "Can men change to support and promote nonviolence and gender equality? Would they only do so on the basis of altruism or they have things to gain?" This suggests that in order to engage men in working towards gender equality, it is essential to "understand the nature of [men's] interests and the basis of their resistance" (Pease, 2014, p.19). Pease (2014, p.19), building on Flood (2005, p.459) and his notion of men's stake in feminist futures, proposes that men should move beyond their socially constructed interests towards emancipatory interests (Pease, 2002), "irrespective of whether it meets their interest or not". In this perspective, men have agency, albeit constrained, to denounce self-seeking behaviour (Butler, 2007; Jewkes et al., 2015). Pease (2014, p.20) further highlights the usefulness of the concept of immediate needs and long-term interests (Molyneux, 1985; Moser, 1989) in outlining strategies of men's engagement in gender equality.

In certain perspectives, a primary motivation for men to choose to support women's equality with men are men's relational interests, i.e. men's relationships with their partners, mothers, sisters, daughters, and so on (Connell, 2005; Ahmed, 2006, p.15; Pease, 2014, p.17-18). In

order to adopt this position, however, men must develop masculinities stemming from moral and ethical commitments that reject gender injustices (Pease, 2014, p.18). These commitments refer to underlying moral responsibility to challenge patriarchy as all men participate in it and thus contribute to injustices that stem from persistent inequality (Pease, 2014, p.22). Not taking action makes men complicit in the harm that results from patriarchal attitudes and practices. Such peer protection of men from bearing consequences for their actions can be overt, manifested in outright defence of men by other men, or subtler by not speaking out. Pease (2014, p.22) also employs the concept of shame, that should be felt by those men who are not directly involved in a particular practice or perpetuating a certain patriarchal view but witnessing it.

Feeling shame and guilt are only one side of the emotional spectrum, though. Pease (2014, p.24) proposes that “[o]ne strategy to achieve discomfort is to foster social empathy in men by encouraging their understanding of the consequences of their privilege and structural power over women and encourage men to develop positive feelings of empathy, compassion and support. Pease (2014, p.31) concludes that more men will need to individually and collectively engage in dismantling their identifications with power and control and in constructing a sense of self that value equality and partnership with women. In doing so, they will recognise that “while gender equality may be a threat to a privatized, autocratic self, created through power over others, it also offers the promise of ‘a communal democratic self’²⁶ that is grounded in social justice and respect for difference”.

Privileged masculine subjectivities can play a critical role in denouncing patriarchy and thus influence less privileged ones (Pease, 2014, p.18). Yet, as noted previously, domination can be internalised (Pheterson, 1986). Men can also demonstrate the seeming paradox explored by Minow (Pease, 2006, p.21) of public criticism of gender inequalities, while at the same time being complicit in maintenance of patriarchy (Pease, 2014, p.20). Besides, although it is crucial to publicly speak out against patriarchy, its open dismissal, especially by a solitary individual, is not easy, particularly in conservative gender regimes with a possibility of severe personal and collective repercussions (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Butler, 2007). In that regard, Farré (2011, p.29) suggests that in societies with strong patriarchal hegemonic masculinities, it is impossible to promote gender equality “without the consent, mindset and involvement of

²⁶ Emphasis added by the author.

the male population”. This necessitates collectively “empower[ing] boys and men in terms of understanding, information, and capacity building regarding equal opportunities of both sexes” (Farré, 2011, p.29). Without men’s empowerment and their realisation of women’s importance and their contribution in various spheres of life, it is not possible to achieve true empowerment for women (Farré, 2011, p.29). With respect to Muslim communities, any attempts to dismantle patriarchal domination of Muslim men over Muslim women should build on efforts of contestation articulated by Muslim women themselves (Hughes, 2017, p.281; Kütük-Kuriş, 2019), while recognising the diversity of voices within such contestations and their particular embeddedness.

Finally, Connell (2005, p.1819) states:

“Gender equality is an undertaking for men that can be creative and joyful. It is a project that realizes high principles of social justice, produces better lives for the women whom men care about, and will produce better lives for the majority of men in the long run. This can and should be a project that generates energy, that finds expression in everyday life and the arts as well as in formal policies, and that can illuminate all aspects of men’s lives”.

Table 3.2 summarises the key aspects of three recent approaches for engaging men in pursuit of gender equality proposed by the Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children (2005); Connell (2005) and Ratele (2015).

Table 3.2: Selected strategies of engaging men in pursuit of gender equality

Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children (2005, p.20)	Connell (2005, p.1812-1819)	Ratele (2015, p.148-153)
- Make masculinities visible - Engage men as agents of change - Create opportunities for men and boys to develop understanding and empathy with women - Conduct a gender analysis, document and share positive roles men can and do play - Identify and work with positive male role models to serve as community mentors - Identify key entry points for working with men and boys - Develop an integrated approach with a focus on both women and men in policies and programmes - Design and implement targeted services that promote gender justice and address gender equity and gender equality	- Focus on men’s relational interest in working towards gender equality, e.g. when engaging young fathers - Raise awareness about toxic effects of an unequal gender order and impact on men, e.g. premature death, drug abuse, stress due to social and economic pressures, and violence leading to imprisonment - Identify roles of state and other institutions as sites and actors in maintaining / dismantling unequal gender order - Present gender equality as wellbeing of community - Recognise the role that could be played by cultural authorities – religious organisations, traditional media and social media, sports - Recognise that diversity of masculinities can complicate transformational processes, but it is also an important asset as there is a	- Poverty, unemployment and income inequality is an acute problem for men and must be addressed in coordination with engaging men in gender transformative strategies - Decent work opportunities can create potential alliances with women - Engagement with unions, poverty reduction agencies and organisations such as the International Labour Organisation can stimulate development of alternative economic institutions in which both women and men benefit - It is essential to work through men’s perception of tradition and culture in their lives and deconstruct essentialist and ‘glorified’ elements of tradition while recognising and preserving non-harmful cultural practices - It is crucial to work on men’s and boys’ understanding of various gender

	range of possibilities and ways of building alliances - Strategically apply national and international policy documents and agreements	structures and how they ‘perform’ gender in their subjective lives - There is a need to provide more nuanced understanding of masculinities, multifaceted contestations of masculinities and more economically, politically, and culturally informed accounts of men’s resistance
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3.4.5 Islamic and Muslim masculinities with references to Bangladesh

Masculinity has received limited analytical attention in social studies of South Asia, with some exceptions of in the work on colonial masculinities and their legacies (Ikeya, 2014, p.244). Chakrabarty (2014, p.412) points out that most of the existing studies remain insular within a particular nationalist frame. In her view, the understanding of complex gendering of men in South Asia requires the examination of masculinities as “a distinct, temporally dynamic, and spatially situated category that has real and material effects on bodies and worlds” (Chakrabarty, 2014, p.413). Drawing on Connell (1985), Chakrabarty (2014, p.413) notes the impossibility to be general as there are multiple hegemonic forms of masculinity in South Asia, not one ideal type superior to other subordinate masculinities. Further, while heterogeneity of masculine performativity in South Asia is impacted by a wide range of intersecting factors (e.g. age, variations over lifetime, ethnicity, race, class, sexuality, ability, religion), Chakrabarty (2014, p.414-415) highlights pervasive presence of political violence as a critical dimension that produces “marginal, expendable, and vulnerable men, and the violence of men towards other men”. Gairola (2014) further points to the domination of heterosexual masculine normativity and the marginalisation of queer subjects. With respect to Bangladesh, D’Costa (2015) draws attention to militarised masculinity that emerged in the 1971 war with the then West Pakistan as part of violence legitimised as a genocidal strategy. This genocidal masculinity sanctioned the use of sexual violence against women and men and paved the way for militarised masculinities to dominate over civilians (Chakrabarty, 2014, p.416).

More recently, the attention has turned to the construction of Otherness and Muslim masculinities within the emergence of home-grown and international Islamic terrorism and as part of the discourse on Islam and gender equality. Aslam (2012, p.2) makes a distinction between Islamic masculinities and Muslim masculinities. In his perspective, Islamic masculinities refer to exemplary masculinities found in sacred texts and narratives, while the notion of Muslim masculinities is applied to everyday experiences of Muslim men in their current socio-economic and political contexts (Aslam, 2012, p.5). According to Musawah

(2018), justice is central to the philosophy of law in Islam. The Qur'an recognised women's full humanity and gave women significant rights within patriarchal culture of the seventh century Arabia when the Qur'an was written. Kabasakal Arat and Hasan (2017, p.3) note that the Qur'an was introduced to "a male-dominated, polytheistic and patriarchal society that worship[ped] both female and male deities", and its "gendered message was delivered to men as the main audience". Classical (male) Muslim jurists worked within these social contexts to deliver their (human-made) rulings, however, many of these rulings are today no longer sustainable, given the profound changes that have occurred within the Muslim communities (Musawah, 2018, p.4).

With respect to gender justice, in the contemporary Muslim contexts, there are two main and competing approaches to Islam: the protectionist' approach and the egalitarian approach (Musawah, 2018). The former acknowledges men and women's equality as believers but denies equality in social and legal domains, justifying this distinction on the basis of nature/culture divide and gender stereotypical differences between women and men (MacCormack and Strathern, 1980). On the other hand, the egalitarian approach also recognises biological differences between men and women, but it respects the core values of the Qur'an and the examples from the Prophet's treatment of women. The egalitarian approach rests on the argument that humanity needs a principle of justice in society to regulate human relations because humans are endowed with different capacities (Musawah, 2018; Nazneen, 2018).

Such distinction is not only a matter of one's personal faith but its purview extends to a broad range of aspects effecting lives of individuals, such as family relations (Musawah 2018; Patwari and Ali, 2020), women's property rights (Ambrus, Field and Torero, 2010; Bishin and Cherif, 2017; UN Habitat, 2018) or their health and safety (Anwary, 2015; Quddus, 2015; Zakiuddin, 2015). Ahmed (2006, p.11) further notes that Islamic fundamentalism, i.e. subscription to "a narrow, literalist and violent vision of Islam" does not pertain only to lower class and uneducated Muslims (low Islamism), but is also supported by highly educated individuals (high Islamism). This divide between the protectionist and progressive approaches to Islam can be perceived in the contemporary Bangladesh, particularly in the ideologies of conservative Islamists and non-governmental organisations respectively (Ahmed, 2014, p.188).

Kabasakal Arat and Hasan (2017) conducted a detailed content analysis of the Qur'an to identify representation of Islamic masculinities in the scriptures. The analysis was undertaken

as a response to the prevalent discourse of associating Islam with violence and Muslims, in particular Muslim men, with terrorism. The study revealed at least five salient character traits related to representation of men in the Qur'an (Kabasakal Arat and Hasan; 2017, p.1). These include: submissiveness, altruism, righteousness, steadfastness and combativeness (Kabasakal Arat and Hasan, 2017, p.1). The authors highlight that "the Qur'an promotes multiple masculinities and none can be labelled as hegemonic" (Kabasakal Arat and Hasan, 2017, p.2). Importantly, the authors underline that the *holistic*²⁷ reading and application of the Qur'an reveals a different set of men's attitudes and behaviours than that of partial and selective readings (Kabasakal Arat and Hasan, 2017, p.2), which can support certain ideological agendas.

According to the analysis, sexuality is accepted as a natural part of human life and not only for procreation, however, it is condoned within a heterosexual union only (Kabasakal Arat and Hasan, 2017, p.4). Men and women are perceived as partners who treat each other with affection and mercy; *both*²⁸ are expected to be chaste, avoid temptation and conceal private parts (Kabasakal Arat and Hasan, 2017, p.4). Parenting and parent-child relationships are mentioned with respect to care for children with patience, while children are required to respect their parents; no further specific gender division of labour with respect to care for children is discussed (Kabasakal Arat and Hasan, 2017, p.5). Further, the primary trait of the believer (male and female) is submissiveness to God (Kabasakal Arat and Hasan, 2017, p.7). In marriage, both husband and wife are bound by a consensual relationship, mutual subservience, and commitment (Kabasakal Arat and Hasan, 2017, p.7). In war, warrior submissiveness is discouraged, while within *umma* (Muslim community), Muslims should balance their personal needs with the needs of the community (Kabasakal Arat and Hasan, 2017, p.7).

With respect to altruism (understood as care, concern for others, compassion, generosity, selfless acts and sacrifice), the most frequent mention concerns the charitable duty as one of the five pillars of Islam (*zakat*), but there are no limits to voluntary contributions, based on one's wealth (Kabasakal Arat and Hasan, 2017, p.7). Conspicuous consumption, greed, stinginess, usury and hoarding are condemned by the Qur'an (Kabasakal Arat and Hasan, 2017,

²⁷ Emphasis in the original.

²⁸ Emphasis added by the author.

p.7). Altruism is not limited to material care but also involves compassion and kindness to the poor, destitute, orphans and slaves (Kabasakal Arat and Hasan, 2017, p.7).

In righteousness, defined as a morally correct behaviour and thinking, honesty, justice and fairness are praised, while arrogance and corruption are defined as the opposite of righteousness (Kabasakal Arat and Hasan, 2017, p.8). In marriage, the righteous man treats his wife with care and commitment; if polygamous, he should treat all wives equally, and in divorce men are told to handle it honestly (Kabasakal Arat and Hasan, 2017, p.8). Parents are prohibited from killing children due to poverty (Kabasakal Arat and Hasan, 2017, p.8) or when a new-born is a girl (Kabasakal Arat and Hasan, 2017, p.10). Righteousness extends to the relationships between women and men in community and in inter-communal affairs, where people, including those from different tribes, are treated as allies (Kabasakal Arat and Hasan, 2017, p.8). Unkind behaviour is equated with injustice (Kabasakal Arat and Hasan, 2017, p.8). Righteousness in war is about seeking just and fair dealings and believers should first investigate peaceful resolution before engaging in combat (Kabasakal Arat and Hasan, 2017, p.8). Self-restraint is frequently advised in the Qur'an, while hatred and aggression is discouraged (Kabasakal Arat and Hasan, 2017, p.8).

Steadfastness, perceived as loyalty, faithfulness, determination and patience, is also frequently mentioned (Kabasakal Arat and Hasan, 2017, p.9). The believers should commit to one's family but not at the expense of neglecting faith (Kabasakal Arat and Hasan, 2017, p.9). Divorce should not be sought in haste or in a state of anger (Kabasakal Arat and Hasan, 2017, p.9). As in battle, men should be steadfast in maintaining peace, including in dealing with non-believers – in the face of animosity from non-believers, Muslims should first demonstrate steadfastness by avoiding conflict (Kabasakal Arat and Hasan, 2017, p.9).

Combativeness is analysed in reference to aggression and use of force to settle conflicts, asserting domination and employing violence (Kabasakal Arat and Hasan, 2017, p.9). The Qur'an frequently refers to martyrdom to fight in the cause of Allah, but the fight must be for a good and just cause, i.e. combat is used only as a last resort and is legitimate only to defend the faith (Kabasakal Arat and Hasan, 2017, p.9). Combat should be carried out in restraint, hasty decisions of retaliation are discouraged, while Muslims are instructed to accept peace when offered and become a kind neighbour (Kabasakal Arat and Hasan, 2017, p.9-10).

Lines on retaliation and retributions conclude with verses that encourage seeking settlement without resorting to violence, i.e. legal retributions are preferred in order to save lives (Kabasakal Arat and Hasan, 2017, p.10). An ordinary Muslim must be also fair and merciful and invite people to follow the faith, but there should be no compulsion to accept the faith (Kabasakal Arat and Hasan, 2017, p.10). Killing is considered as the most abhorrent act and allowed only to protect faith (Kabasakal Arat and Hasan, 2017, p.10). Killing another believer is not permissible, as well as killing somebody without a just cause (Kabasakal Arat and Hasan, 2017, p.10). The justification of beating a wife for her disobedience is highly controversial and even if the verse used to sanction such violence is taken literally, beating is perceived as the last resort – the main advice with regard to family relations appears to be showing care and kindness (Kabasakal Arat and Hasan, 2017, p.10-11).

The study by Kabasakal Arat and Hasan (2017, p.11) highlights that each situation requires a unique combination of masculine ideals; there is no hierarchical ideal of masculinity established in the Qur'an – the Qur'an suggests preferable options for attitudes and behaviours but never makes the final decision. Importantly, "[t]he result is not a formula but a complex message that the Muslim man has to configure for his given situation using the wisdom... granted by God" (Kabasakal Arat and Hasan, 2017, p.11). As noted previously, this flexibility may lead to a selective reading of the Qur'anic verses which produces alternative discourses contradicting the overall message of Islam (Kabasakal Arat and Hasan, 2017, p.11). As noted by the authors, a disconnect between what is proscribed in the Qur'an as ideal masculine traits and what is practiced by 'real men' exists, and without a critical analysis and debate, myths continue to be taken as the 'truth' (Kabasakal Arat and Hasan, 2017, p.11).

The interpretation of Qur'anic verses has a particular importance on efforts to eliminate violence against women and girls. Ahmed (2006, p.15) points to "certain deep-rooted psychological issues within the Muslim male psyche regarding women, gender, sexuality and the relationship of these with religion". The analysis of intimate partner violence in Bangladesh by Anwary (2015) reveals man's desire to control his wife's body and to demand her obedience and submission (Anwary, 2015, p.42). This male prerogative is combined with other culturally mandated customs, especially dowry, son's preference, women's responsibility for household and childcare, and (public) manifestation of male sexual prowess (e.g. through procreation). Transgressions against these norms can result in severe bodily harm of women, such as beating, disfiguration, gang rape and even death. Anwary (2015, p.44) further points to patriarchal peer

support that men count on in delivering their punishment to women that can extend to religious and state institutions, as some men carry out a wife's punishment in public, proudly announce their wife's killing in front of other community members and even discard a woman's dead and mutilated body in a public space. Such violent masculinity "is tolerated and encouraged by the larger society" (Anwary, 2015, p.44).

In contrast to Anwary, Ahmed (2008, 2014) presents a more nuanced understanding of masculinities in Bangladesh in connection to her concepts of togetherness and marital quality. Ahmed (2014, p.188) notes: "Peace in the household has always been a gendered concept in Bangladesh: a 'good' Muslim woman is responsible for maintaining this peace, and it is she who is blamed if there is 'trouble' in the household". The analysis of household relations by Ahmed (2014, p.189) stems from the critique of Sen's co-operative conflict in a household by arguing that this model overlooks the notion of the quality of marriage. In her analysis, "the quality of the spousal relationship is an essential part of the moral economy of the household, which is based on values of sharing and caring" (Ahmed, 2014, p.190). It also incorporates a range of emotions relevant for understanding household dynamics, such as unexpressed desire, expectation, disappointment, fulfilment, and so on (Ahmed, 2014, p.191). Love as mutuality in work and life, trust, respect and affection are perceived as the basis of everyday empathy. The women in the field study also highlighted husband's willingness to listen to his wife, which was part of a high quality marriage based on *mutuality of minds*; instead, low marital quality led to a master-servant marriage (Ahmed, 2014).

In an earlier study on an ideal Muslim husband in sharecropper communities, Ahmed (2008) distinguished four types of masculine embodiment: *high-minded men* (loving household, caring husband, rewarding fatherhood), *mixed men* (shadowed household, some joint decision-making, shadow of violence, rewarding fatherhood), *abusive men* (fractured household, wife as subordinate, conflictual financial decisions, violence is extreme, little investment in fatherhood), and *habla* [lacking common sense] *men* (woman as sole decision-maker, no violence). An ideal husband was high-minded and an abusive husband was cruel (Ahmed, 2014, p.198). The ideal husband was also a good Muslim, respectful of women's reproductive labour and her need for rest (Ahmed, 2014, p.199-200). A particularly valued attitude concerned a husband's willingness to put property in his wife's name, which sometimes required overt resistance to the patriarchal norms imposed by the husband's family (Ahmed, 2014, p.201). Women also highlighted the husband's willingness to involve his wife in joint

decision-making (Ahmed, 2014, p.201). Their aim was not so much to make autonomous decisions from a husband, but rather to “make important decisions together” and build solidarity between the husband and the wife in the face of family and communal resistance (Ahmed, 2014, p.202). Women further perceived the emotional investment of the husband in fatherhood as a key indicator of high-minded men (Ahmed, 2014, p.202), which was demonstrated in the husband’s interest in his children (both male and female), their education and futures. Husbands’ relaxation of the norms around *purdah* (women’s seclusion) also featured prominently in women’s narrations; many pointing to an unreasonable lack of trust in women (Ahmed, 2014, p.203).

In general, women derived their feminist positions from Islamic progressive approaches to women’s equality with men; particularly referring to the progressiveness of the Prophet (Ahmed, 2014, p.205). According to Ahmed (2014, p.206), the peace-in-the-household model provides an opportunity for the transformation of oppressive masculinity, while increasing men’s altruism in relationships with women. This concept reflects the proposal by Pease (2014) to build empathy with women and feminist masculinity explored by hooks (1998) encouraging men to learn to embrace and express their emotions as a fundamental aspect of manhood.

Another study by Hasan, Aggleton and Persson (2018) analysed three generations of men in Bangladesh – older, middle aged and younger men – and their adherence to certain gender values in measuring men’s progressiveness or ‘modernity’. The study confirms that social construction of masculinities in Bangladesh is essentially concerned with heterosexual men; queer identities are largely condemned and homophobia in the country is rampant, in line with the dominant heteronormative cultural settings of South Asia²⁹ (Hasan, Aggleton and Persson, 2018, p.348). The study draws on the concept of social generation (Pilcher, 1994), in which generation is formed by individuals who share similar worldviews, thoughts and social actions and tend to have a particular type of historically relevant behaviour. The study explores masculinities in three generation groups: older men (53-75 years); middle-aged men (30-46 years); and younger men (19-27 years).

For the older men, the centrality of religion and particular religious and cultural beliefs constituted the main reference in the analysis of their masculinity (Hasan, Aggleton and Persson, 2018, p.352). Working hard, earning money and providing for the family were the

²⁹ Homosexuality was decriminalised in India in 2018.

main attributes of a 'real man' (Hasan, Aggleton and Persson, 2018, p.352), complete with sexual prowess, the importance of fathering children as well as participation/non-participation in the 1971 war (Hasan, Aggleton and Persson, 2018, p.352-353). Unlike the previous generation, the middle generation men's main preoccupation was economic insecurity and unemployment posing threats to their masculinity (Hasan, Aggleton and Persson, 2018, p.353). These men were also acutely aware of hierarchies within men stemming from 'having/not having money', power and social rank (Hasan, Aggleton and Persson, 2018, p.354). Like with the older men, however, the middle generation men, too, perceived a heterosexual married, hardworking and sexually active man as the ideal (Hasan, Aggleton and Persson, 2018, p.354). They were generally against violence, but some aggressive behaviour was accepted, while overt homophobia was a norm (Hasan, Aggleton and Persson, 2018, p.354).

In contrast, the younger men interviewed within the study used more nuanced, sometimes contradictory, expressions in discussions of their perceptions of masculinities (Hasan, Aggleton and Persson, 2018, p.354) formed within the context of globalisation, advanced communication technologies and new cultural concepts they had been exposed to (Hasan, Aggleton and Persson, 2018, p.355). These men demonstrated more diverse masculinities than the previous generations. They did not aspire to have government (i.e. secure) jobs, as expressed by the middle generation men, but preferred high-paid white-collar jobs, which would increase their independence. Style and education were deemed necessary to be successful in life (Hasan, Aggleton and Persson, 2018, p.355). However, becoming an established man able to provide for one's family was also important as was sexual prowess within marriage and 'satisfying a woman' (Hasan, Aggleton and Persson, 2018, p.355). As the previous generations, most of the interviewed young men also believed a real man should be attracted to women only and expressed negative attitudes towards homosexuality (Hasan, Aggleton and Persson, 2018, p.355). Religion, on the other hand, while important, played a less significant role in the lives of these young men (Hasan, Aggleton and Persson, 2018, p.356). Men engaged in same-sex sexual relations questioned prevalent heteronormativity in their country; some also identified as Muslims and did not perceive their sexual identity to be contradictory to Islam (Hasan, Aggleton and Persson, 2018, p.356).

While social generations are not homogenous (Hasan, Aggleton and Persson, 2018, p.357), enactments of masculinity are impacted by multiple, often intersecting, factors (Connell, 2005; Chakrabarty, 2014). Four traits stood out and cut across the three generations examined by Hasan, Aggleton and Persson (2018, p.357): having money, being a good provider, having a

regular job outside of household, and being sexually active. Although as each generation tends to get ‘fresh start’, the study corroborates that gender ideologies are powerful and resistant to change, and certain attitudes and practices endure over time, even while undergoing considerable socio-economic transformation under the impact of modernisation and globalisation as in the case of contemporary Bangladesh (Barker et al., 2005, p.149; Hasan, Aggleton and Persson, 2018, p.357).

The analysis by Hasan, Aggleton and Persson (2018) bears similarities with the study of young Taiwanese men by Chen and Mac an Ghaill (2017) who identified simultaneous weakening of social and cultural traditions and re-traditionalisation; for example, by adhering to a breadwinner role, while also striving to be an attentive father; and a study by Scarborough, Sin and Risman (2018) which examined shifting attitudes on equality between women and men in households and workplaces in the United States amongst pre-baby boomers, baby boomers, generation X and millennials within three broader categories of *egalitarians*, *ambivalents* and *traditionalists*. Chen and Mac an Ghaill (2017) distinguished men following *strong tradition* (cultural comfort/endorsing) from those inclining towards *weak tradition* (cultural formality/distancing). In both studies, de-traditionalisation (Chen and Mac an Ghaill, 2017) was less apparent among the older generation.

The studies cited above point to the significance of men’s agency in reflecting on ‘tradition’, values and practices. However, they also “challenge a dualistic understanding of tradition and reflexive modernisation” (Chen and Mac an Ghaill, 2017, p.54) – agency can undo the tradition, but it can also contribute to *choosing*³⁰ ‘tradition’ (Chen and Mac an Ghaill, 2017, p.52). Here, tradition, refers to adherence to patriarchal values, norms and practices. The processes of de-traditionalisation and reinforcement of traditions can occur simultaneously and in asymmetry with economic development and societal transformations (Chen and Mac an Ghaill, 2017, p.53; Scarborough, Sin and Risman, 2018).

Furthermore, as highlighted by Chen and Mac an Ghaill (2017, p.65), analysing men’s standpoints on social values must be sensitive to understanding men’s location within spaces of point of view (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Kenway and McLeod, 2004). For instance, the study by Scarborough, Sin and Risman (2018) revealed that the millennials in the United States are much more traditionalist with respect to household division of labour, while holding

³⁰ Emphasis added by the author.

egalitarian views on gender norms in the workplace. Another recent study on patriarchy and masculinities carried out in Afghanistan, on the other hand, found that older Afghan men held much more gender-equitable views than younger men (Promundo-US, UN Women and Global Affairs Canada, 2018, p.48). This was mainly due to the fact that overall insecurity had contributed to erosion of younger men's selfhood of provider and protector; thus, these men had turned to gender-rigid tactics to preserve their masculine identity (Promundo-US, UN Women and Global Affairs Canada, 2018, p.48). Tradition (that is patriarchy) is lived through negotiation, resistance or complicity (Chen and Mac an Ghaill, 2017, p.66). Identity, although durable, is not immutable (McNay, 1999, p.95). It is located within a social context, within which "the reflexive transformation of identity unfolds" (McNay, 1999, p.95). As concluded by Hasan, Aggleton and Persson (2018, p.358), masculinities are "clearly open to change, which is cause for hope and provides a foundation to build on in struggles to achieve greater gender equality and gender justice".

3.5 Key conclusions from the analytical framework

The theoretical framework for this study rests on three interconnected concepts: 1) women's (economic) empowerment; 2) women's labour; and 3) masculinities. The study draws on feminist economics and critical men's studies and their relations to development practice, including the promotion of sustainable economic models that incorporate women's equal economic rights pursued within public strategies and institutions. The study argues against static, reductive and regressive representation of men and explores masculinities in contemporary Bangladesh with the aim to understand their relations to women's economic opportunities (and their actual outcomes) that can lead to improved women's economic empowerment policies and programming. The research stems from an inclusive and reflective social research methodology (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) encompassed in Complexity Paradigms (Chambers, 2017).

With respect to women's (economic) empowerment, the study incorporates the notion of capabilities as freedoms to do and to be what the person has reason to value (Sen, 1999). Capabilities are not only non-static ends of development but also its primary means (Sen, 1999). Removal of unfreedoms should be done through democratic deliberation (Sen, 1999) with individuals understood as subjects, not objects, of development (Freire, 1970; Sen, 1999), while being conscious that freedoms as well as development policy-making are a result of discursive practice and can lead to marginalisation of certain priorities (Rahnema, 1997; Chambers, 2006; Molyneux, 2007; Mowles, 2013). Further, empowerment is not only linked to increasing income or material assets, but requires a holistic approach (Nussbaum, 2000; 2011). Equally, it is not sufficient to support access to opportunities without being concerned with outcomes of these opportunities (Phillips, 2004). In addition, while focusing on women's needs is crucial, empowerment should aim to incorporate strategic gender interests which challenge structural gender inequalities (Molyneux, 1985; Moser, 1989); these should be context-specific but acknowledge that power relations affect needs and interests' formulation (Molyneux, 2007; Charusheela, 2008; Guérin, Kumar and Agier, 2013; Lipi, 2016). Internalised oppression and accommodation to inequalities restrict individuals' true life choices (Pheterson, 1986; Rowlands, 1995; Phillips, 2004).

In feminist discourse, women's empowerment is perceived as a radical approach requiring to address structural inequalities between women and men (Cornwall, 2016). Empowerment is understood as a non-linear transformation process that involves individual conscientisation followed by efforts to undermine structural aspects of inequalities; it is a continuous process

as new inequalities may appear over time (Rowlands, 1995; Hunt and Samman, 2016). Empowerment is concerned with the operation of individual agency and how an individual capability set can be expanded, while linking it with a political action ('personal is political'). This is why empowerment requires a multilevel approach (Rowlands, 1995) and attention to various spheres of power (Batliwala, 1993; 1994), including control over resources and ideology (Agarwal, 1994; Sen, 1997) and enhancement of an enabling environment (Sholkamy, 2010; Hunt and Samman; 2016). Empowerment objectives and the assessment of their achievement are set discursively and thus can vary or even be counterproductive to empowerment (Kabeer, 2011). Empowerment efforts can also reflect tensions with respect to 'modernity', cultural essentialism and political and religious ideologies (Narayan, 1998).

Women's work is understood as a complex phenomenon involving diverse unpaid and paid activities in the formal and informal economy, which can be explained through a hierarchical employment pyramid. While a proportion of women's activities is conducted at subsistence and micro levels, women's labour is increasingly connected to complex global value chains, even though indirectly and as 'disposable', workers (Sweetman and Pearson, 2018). The interconnected globalised world, can, however, contribute to increased information-sharing on working conditions and improve advocacy on workers' rights. The concept of humane economics (Benería, 1995) and sustainable economic growth is applied to underline prioritisation of human needs over efficiency of markets and maximisation of economic growth (Molyneux and Steinberg, 1995; Benería, Berik and Floro, 2015; Friends of the Earth and C40 Cities, 2018).

In development practice, greater recognition of women's economic roles has been promoted at least since the 1970s (Boserup, 1970). Feminist economics points to women's location at the intersection of production and reproduction, especially with respect to (unpaid) exploitation of women's reproductive roles at household level for recuperation of workers and nurturing next generations of workers (Elson, 1998; Benería 2003, 2016). Such work does not necessarily diminish with women's uptake of productive roles, leading to excessive burden and time poverty (Hochschild, 1989; Palmer, 1995; Brickell and Chant, 2010). In efficiency and instrumentalist approaches to women's paid work, women are often perceived as 'resourceful' and 'altruistic' mothers that makes sacrifices for the good of their families (Brickell and Chant 2010). In addition, while there is an increasing tendency towards women's involvement in (formal) employment, men's share of household work and care responsibilities have lagged

behind, particularly in countries with limited women's equality (Budlender, 2008; Barker and Pawlak, 2011; Arraíz, 2018).

From the perspective of feminist economics, women's economic inclusion is a human right and an end in itself. Women's economic inequalities should be addressed as part of national economic plans as well as global strategies, such as the current Sustainable Development Goals. Overlooking structural barriers can perpetuate multifaceted inequalities; for example, with respect to micro-entrepreneurship which can relegate women to low-paid and marginal sectors with limited growth potential (Karim, 2011; Duvendack and MacLean, 2015; Dolan, Johnstone-Luis and Scott, 2018). In formal employment, women are often affected by both vertical and horizontal segregation, which can lead to low wages and poor protection in times of crises or older age (Alksnis, Desmarais and Curtis, 2008; Asaduzzaman, Kabir and Radovic-Markovic, 2015; ADB, 2016; Zhao and Zhao, 2018). The focus also tends to be on women's micro-businesses, rather than addressing direct and indirect labour discrimination in the formal economy. This includes, but is not limited to, lacking supportive services for small and medium female entrepreneurs that can normalise women as economic actors on a par with men. In general, women's entrepreneurship is often structured as the inferior Other vis-à-vis men (Marlow and Swail, 2014; Abdo and Kerbage, 2018).

Feminist research further challenges the notion of vulnerability of female-headed households (Chant, 2003, 2008). Without a male patriarch these households might be resource-poor, but they can experience other non-material benefits such as equitable redistribution of responsibilities and more control. In addition, women in male-headed households may assume a chief breadwinning role, for example, when a husband is disabled. Furthermore, women can construct their power and wealth through male family members (Guérin, Kumar and Agier, 2013; Lipi, 2016), however this may lock them in positions of inequality. Feminist research challenges unitary models of households (Becker, 1965; Grossbard, 2010) and perceives cooperative conflict more realistic in capturing intra-household relationships (Sen, 1999).

Unequal power relations at household, community and wider societal levels are a contributing factor in gender-based and sexual violence in the workplace, and when commuting to and from work, particularly associated with countries with restricted gender equality. Woman's employment outside of her home poses a challenge to male authority as the principal breadwinner and his control of her body and her sexuality (Anwary, 2015; BBS, 2016). Increasing urbanisation, however, offers a possibility to promote different lifestyles that

disrupt, at least some, social and gender norms about women's work, their aspirations and behaviour (Pun, 2005), although migration to urban zones is also accompanied by various effects of urban penalty. Although there are many shared interests, women's experience as economic actors is not homogenous, and intersectionality should be employed in contextual analyses of women's labour.

While development policy-making and practice has positioned itself as one of the main drivers of building inclusive economies, feminist scholars have raised multiple concerns about actual commitment of development actors to the transformational notion of women's (economic) empowerment (Mowles, 2013; Cornwall, 2016). Such efforts are undermined by the recent shift to bureaucratisation and managerialism of aid (Wallace and Porter, 2013; Chambers, 2017) that prioritises linear and controlled methodological approaches. The increasing reliance on business-like practices in the non-profit sector hinders social activism (Mowles, 2013; Chambers, 2017). The current aid sector continues to prioritise Western and English-speaking institutions, which reward a particular type of 'experts' (Chambers, 2017). Subaltern voices of those who propose different approaches are often suppressed (Mowles, 2013; Chambers, 2017). Feminist research challenges tokenistic and corporate 'feminisms', for which women's economic empowerment is often empty rhetoric exacerbated by the clipped discourse on social media (Mowles, 2013; Cornwall, 2016). Instead, development practice should favour nuanced analyses underpinned by self-critical reflexivity and in depth and contextualised research that applies Complexity Paradigms recognising the 'messiness' of lived reality (Chambers, 2017).

The understanding of masculinities draws on feminist explorations of normative gender. While in some discourse, socially constructed gender is differentiated from the given biological category of sex, more nuanced conceptualisations point to discursive formation of both gender and sex as well as body and sexuality (Butler, 2007). In performativity (Butler, 2007), gender is not a noun, but a doing located within a particular context, that, inevitably, restricts one's agency. Gender norms can be ascribed to particular gender identities and learnt through gender socialisation that can occur in multiple spaces and over time (Beauvoir, 1949). Gender norms are crucial in cultural intelligibility of gender identities within a particular gender order (Matthews, 1984). Gender norms guide one's behaviour throughout their lifetime, but are not static and can change.

Gender norms and gender stereotypes can act as powerful tools in restricting one's freedoms to choose how to live life, often combined with stereotypes based on race, age, economic status

and so on (Butler, 2007; EIGE, 2018; OHCHR, 2020). Together with gender prejudices, they affect how particular gender identities are perceived and what capabilities are available to them in a particular society. Patriarchal societies, placing power in the hands of men (Kandiyoti, 1988), often perpetuate essentialist gender stereotypes, such as associating femininity with its 'natural' propensity for nurture and emotions rather than rationality (MacCormack and Strathern, 1980). In the understanding of the universal binary of femininity/masculinity, femininity is constructed as the inferior Other (Irigaray, 1974). In heteronormative imperative, LGBTQ identities are also constructed as the inferior and 'unnatural' Other and thus are open to persecution (Butler, 2007).

The understanding of what gender is and what its implications are is at the core of the political revolution to challenge unequal gender relations (including multiple identities) and to advocate for greater gender equality (Butler, 2007). In socially conservative contexts, however, the discourse on 'gender relations' can be reduced to inequalities between women and men. In recent feminist discourse, femininities and masculinities are fragmented, i.e. they differ due to a number of intersecting factors (Butler, 2007). However, some universality of gendered experience can be maintained for pragmatic advocacy reasons.

Besides patriarchy, or the narrower concept of patriarchal bargain referring to accommodation to as well as contestations of patriarchy (Kandiyoti, 1988), the concept of hegemonic masculinity has been used to highlight structural operations of gender inequalities. The concept refers to dominant, most praised, masculinity and how it asserts its domination over other masculinities in a given gender spectrum. Other masculinities are constituted through their positioning towards hegemonic masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Jewkes et al, 2015). For example, complicit masculinities derive benefits from its support to hegemonic masculinity, while some alternative masculinities demonstrate their alternative nature by differentiating themselves from hegemonic masculinity. Such differentiation can involve manipulation of male bodies by actively participating subjects. Hegemonic masculinity is not necessarily perpetuated through violence but its spread may be supported by coercive means; for example, through specific institutions or ideologies, including through its representatives or social agents (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). In earlier conceptualisations, hegemonic masculinity was perceived as 'not feminine' and 'not gay' (Jewkes et al., 2015); more recent discourse underlines that hegemonic masculinity can resist and also support gender equality (Pease, 2014).

Masculinity, as femininity, is an abstract concept constructed through discursive practice; as such, it is a fluid product that can change over time. It is fragmented, given effects of other intersecting categories (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Butler, 2007); hence, it is more appropriate to refer to masculinities. Masculinities can occupy different positions situationally and thus demonstrate a hybrid nature (Bridges and Pascoe, 2014; Jewkes et al., 2015). Crucially, men have a choice, albeit constrained, in deciding their position relative to gender equality; this choice is the target for change by gender equality advocates (Jewkes et al., 2015). It is thus crucial to understand the essence of men's resistance to gender equality and what can motivate men to increase their support for egalitarian gender relations (Pease, 2014; Ratele, 2015). Explorations of masculinities should be taken at multiple interconnected levels (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005), while men should be removed from their location of as 'a problem' in policy and programmes on gender equality (Connell, 2005; Farré, 2011).

Personal patriarchal systems involve men's domination over women within personal relations at home and in the public sphere, however, men continue to enjoy their privileges thanks to institutionalised patriarchal systems (Pease, 2014). Patriarchal privilege is often underpinned by other ideologies that justify men's supremacy over women and non-heterosexual identities. Peer protection of men by other men is another mechanism of maintaining patriarchy. It can be overt or subtler by not speaking out (Pease, 2014).

Understanding men's needs and interests can be a useful approach to mobilise men for working on gender equality goals (Pease, 2014). This can be complemented by increasing men's understanding of men's stake in feminist futures (Flood, 2005). It can be possible, for example, by appealing to men's relational interests in partnerships with women (hooks, 1998) and moving away from men's self-interest to emancipatory interests (Pease, 2002) based on denouncing self-seeking behaviour (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Commitment to democratic manhood (Kimmel, 1996) rejects gender injustices (Pease, 2014). Younger generations might be more receptive of goals of gender equality, which can motivate them to abandon their unearned patriarchal privilege (Connell, 2005; Pease, 2014). Poor, embattled, and frustrated men may be, however, reluctant to join gender equality work when their own physical and material safety is not secured (Silberschmidt, 2011; Chakraborty, 2014).

While shaming men for supporting/benefiting from gender inequality is one approach, encouraging men's positive emotions of understanding, empathy, compassion and support can be more effective (hooks, 1998; Pease, 2014). Privileged men can play a critical role in

denouncing patriarchy and thus influence less privileged men (Pease, 2014). However, men can also demonstrate Minow's seeming paradox (Pease, 2006) of public criticism of gender inequalities, while at the same time being complicit in maintenance of patriarchy (Pease, 2014). Building alliances amongst men and their collective empowerment is critical as publicly speaking out against patriarchy can have negative repercussions for a solitary critic of patriarchy (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Butler, 2007). Men's work on supporting gender equality should be undertaken as a creative, joyful and empowering endeavour for men (Connell, 2005), while also addressing the negative impacts of men's privilege on men themselves (Chant and Gutmann, 2000; UNDAW, 2008; Jewkes et al., 2015).

With respect to Muslim masculinities in South Asia, heterosexuality and marginalisation of queer subjects is a norm in regional gender orders (Gairola, 2014). Militarised masculinity also has some validity in Bangladesh, given the history of violence in the country (D'Costa, 2014). Islamic masculinities are distinguished from Muslim masculinities in this study. Islamic masculinities refer to exemplary masculinities found in sacred texts and narratives, while the notion of Muslim masculinities is applied to everyday experiences of Muslim men in their current socio-economic and political contexts (Aslam, 2012). With respect to gender justice, there are two main and competing approaches to Islam: protectionist and egalitarian. The former acknowledges men's and women's equality as believers but denies equality in social and legal domains, whereas the egalitarian approach supports women's equality in private and public spheres. Some Islamic fundamentalist ideologies incorporate misogynistic tendencies and deny women's equality even as believers (Ahmed, 2006; Bates, 2020). Islamic masculinity traits incorporated in the Qur'an are largely conducive to egalitarian household relations (Kabasakal Arat and Hasan, 2017). This should encourage, rather than hinder, women's economic empowerment in Muslim communities.

Some studies on Bangladesh focus on exploring a man's desire to control his wife's body and demand her obedience and submission as her husband, which can lead to violence against women (VAW) exacerbated by wide-spread communal and institutional consent to VAW (Anwary, 2015). Other studies propose non-static exploration of masculinities, for example, associating the quality of the spousal relationship with enhanced women's empowerment (Ahmed, 2008, 2014) based on love, care and empathy (hooks, 1998; Pease, 2014). A generational study by Hasan, Aggleton and Persson (2018) point to the hybrid nature of contemporary masculinities in Bangladesh. Some gender norms have weakened over time, but several masculinity traits endure, including: having money, being a good provider, having a

regular job outside of household, and being sexually active. In this context, the concepts of de-traditionalisation and re-traditionalisation, which can occur simultaneously (Chen and Mac an Ghail, 2017), appear to be relevant in the analysis of current Muslim masculinities in Bangladesh within the shifting context of ‘modernity’ and globalisation.

Several studies were useful for the conceptualisation of the masculinity continuum (Antagonists, Allies and Advocates) adopted for the analysis of masculinity positioning towards women’s economic empowerment. In addition to Jackson (2015), Ahmed (2008; 2014) studied low-income Muslim men through four categories of high-minded, mixed, abusive and *habla* men within the framework of quality marriage. Chen and Mac an Ghail (2017) distinguished Taiwanese men that followed strong cultural practices of masculinity from those inclining towards weak tradition. Hasan, Aggleton and Persson (2018) analysed older, middle aged and younger Muslim men with respect to their social progressiveness. Scarborough, Sin and Risman (2018) examined shifting attitudes on equality between women and men in household and workplace in four generations of American men within three groups, including: egalitarians, ambivalents and traditionalists.

Following the outline of the analytical framework of the study in Chapter 3, the next chapter explains the methodological approaches applied in the collection of empirical data and their analysis.

Chapter 4 Methodological Framework of the Study

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 outlines the methodological approach adopted for the empirical phase of the study. Its rationale was guided by the central research question: *How do Antagonist, Ally and Advocate masculinities position towards WEE in the context of Bangladesh and what can be learned from these positionings to inform development praxis on WEE?* Three sub-questions were further identified to facilitate the process: 1) What critical aspects of WEE and idealised masculinities facilitating WEE can be identified in indigenous discourses in low-income contexts?; 2) What gender norms, attitudes and practices related to WEE can be identified in the discourse by Muslim men that drive or hinder men's progressiveness on WEE?; 3) What are the policy implications for development praxis on WEE originating from the exploration of Antagonist, Ally and Advocate masculinities?

To respond to the central research question and the sub-questions, six research instruments were designed using multiple qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. These instruments were designed to investigate: 1) indigenous perceptions of WEE by low-income women and men; 2) perceptions of ideal manhood by low-income women; 3) prevalence of men's attitudes on WEE; 4) construction of manhood with respect to WEE; 5) men's views on WEE development strategies; 6) expert feedback on a men's empowerment framework. Mixed methods, including focus groups, peer-to-peer survey, life-history narrations, gender analysis, interviews, Delphi method and observation, were used to analyse these aspects. Table 4.1 summarises specific methods and tools applied in the research in relation to each sub-question.

Following the introductory part, Section 4.2 presents the multi-level analysis approach adopted by the research, which also considers units of analysis applied in each research instrument. Section 4.3 outlines how the geographical locations of primary data collection were selected, followed by the rationale for identifying respondents. Section 4.4 explains the selection of respondents for each instrument. Section 4.5 discusses in detail the methodology of each research instrument. Section 4.6 considers constraints and limitations of the research process and how these were overcome. This section also includes ethical considerations in relation to potential biases. Given the diversity and large amount of data that was collected, the research process adopted several quality control measures for the data collection and the analysis, discussed in Section 4.7. Chapter 4 concludes with a brief note on the author's positionality presented in Section 4.8 and a summary of the methodological framework in Section 4.9

Table 4.1: Summary of methods and tools applied in the research

<i>Research sub-questions</i>	<i>Methods</i>	<i>Instruments</i>	<i>Description of methodology</i>
1. What critical aspects of WEE and idealised masculinities facilitating WEE can be identified in indigenous discourses in low-income contexts?	Focus groups, observation	Instrument 1: Indigenous perceptions of WEE by low-income women and men	Indigenous discourses on WEE by low-income women and men compared with academic theories on WEE, women's labour and masculinities.
	Focus groups, observation, visual images	Instrument 2: Perceptions of ideal manhood by low-income women	Conceptualisation of an ideal manhood and men's support to WEE through the discourse by low-income women using visual images.
2. What gender norms, attitudes and practices related to WEE can be identified in the discourse by Muslim men that drive or hinder men's progressiveness on WEE?	Survey	Instrument 3: Prevalence of men's attitudes on WEE	Exploration of men's attitudes associated with masculinity and femininity structured around key themes relevant from the perspective of WEE.
	Life history, observation	Instrument 4: Construction of manhood with respect to WEE	In-depth exploration of men's life histories from childhood to adulthood and mapping events, influences and views formulations relevant for each respondent within the ambit of WEE and masculinities.
3. What are the policy implications for development praxis on WEE originating from the exploration of Antagonist, Ally and Advocate masculinities?	Gender analysis Interviews	Instrument 5: Men's interpretation on WEE strategies and egalitarian gender relations	Structured analysis of the interpretations of WEE strategies by senior male managers following an adapted gender analysis tool.
	Delphi method/expert dialogue	Instrument 6: Feedback on a men's empowerment framework	Feedback on data analysis to contribute to the formulation of a men's empowerment framework aiming to enhance men's roles in supporting WEE within development strategies.

4.2 The multilevel analysis applied to the study

To examine the main subject of the study, the research explores several broader and overlapping themes relevant for the nexus of the private and the political: intra-household dynamics; labour markets and employment; religion and cultures; sexuality; policy-making and development practice. Accordingly, the investigation takes place in communal, societal/state, regional and global arenas, while analysing normative institutions, structures, cultures and norms. The need for a multi-level, multifaceted analysis of masculinity positioning towards gender equality is highlighted by various authors (Connell, 2005; Ahmed, 2008; 2014; Pease, 2014; Ratele, 2015; Cornwall, 2016). In addition, Ahmed (2008, p.136) underscores the “impossibility to change dominant masculinity” by changing individual men only and without understanding broader contextual connections between masculinity and “operations of masculine regimes”. Hence, the author advocates “examining the cultural, legal, religious, and economic notions of manhood at the societal, national, and global levels” (Ahmed, 2008, p.148).

The study identified the following levels of analysis relevant for the central theme of the study:

1) Individual, relational level of analysis:

- men’s attitudes, behaviours and practices with respect to WEE within the private domain from the perspective of men as fathers, husbands, sons and brothers (primary focus) and male relatives (secondary focus);
- women’s perspectives on manhood within marriage, the family and the household;

2) Communal and societal/state level:

- men’s attitudes, behaviours and practices related to WEE within public domains, including women’s inclusion in the labour market and education, workplace arrangement, development institutions, legislation, and norms affecting women’s economic inclusion;
- women’s perspectives on women’s paid work in relation to an enabling environment facilitating women’s economic inclusion

3) Regional perspectives:

- secondary data sources on the South Asia region and regional socio-cultural, economic and political impacts on construction of masculinities; this includes, but is not limited to, a

discourse on women's rights in Islam and national and regional policies with respect to women's equality with men, particularly since 1947; and

4) *Global perspectives:*

- reflection on relevant international (universal) human rights instruments, institutions and standpoints they promote with respect to masculinities, women's labour and women's economic empowerment, and their relevancy in Bangladesh.

Considering the multi-level analysis approach adopted for the research, specific units of analysis were identified for each research instrument. Table 4.2 summarises the units of analysis and the corresponding levels of analysis and research instrument.

Table 4.2: Units and levels of analysis applied in the research instruments

Instrument	Unit of analysis	Level of analysis
Instrument 1: Indigenous perceptions of WEE by low-income women and men	Individual women and men	- Relational (respondents' experience in their families, households) - Communal/societal (respondents' experience of communal and societal arrangements and attitudes to WEE) - Global (WEE, women's labour and masculinity theories)
Instrument 2: Perceptions of ideal manhood by low-income women	Individual women	- Relational (respondents' experience in their marriage, family, household)
Instrument 3: Prevalence of men's attitudes on WEE	Individual men	- Relational (respondents' experience in their families, households) - Communal/societal (respondents experience of communal and societal arrangements and attitudes to WEE)
Instrument 4: Construction of manhood with respect to WEE	Individual men	- Relational (respondents' experience in their families, households) - Communal/societal (respondents experience of communal and societal arrangements and attitudes to WEE)
Instrument 5: Men's interpretations of WEE strategies and egalitarian gender relations	Individual men	- Individual (respondents' understanding of and commitment to policies and strategies on WEE) - Communal/societal (respondents' interpretations of organisational approaches to WEE and their views on egalitarian gender relations in society)
Instrument 6: Feedback a men's empowerment framework	Policy recommendations	- Communal/societal (respondents' advice on policy recommendations in relation to using masculinities to enhance WEE)

4.3 Identification of main sites of data collection and respondents

The research followed a multi-stage approach to identify respondents. This involved the following process: 1) selecting divisions and districts; 2) identifying specific intervention sites; and 3) identifying individual respondents in line with each instrument and in consultations with partner organisations supporting the study.

Based on the contextual analysis, the study identified six key criteria in the selection of divisions/districts for primary data collection. The analysis was then carried out by applying ranking specific for each criterion. The criteria considered in the selection of geographical locations included:

- 1) Geographical location (rural, urban)
- 2) Economic opportunities for low-income women (diversified industrial and service jobs, primarily agrarian and daily labour)
- 3) Social differences in life styles, access to services and information (diversified, restricted)
- 4) Environmental impact on household work and livelihoods (significant, minor)
- 5) Access (challenging, minor challenges, without constraint)
- 6) Cost (high, average, low)

The author utilised her professional and personal links in the country, which not only reduced the overall costs of conducting data collection, but also facilitated logistics of organising field meetings, including, but not limited to, identification of volunteers supporting field work and access to gatekeepers.

Following the analysis of six criteria, the study selected four main sites for primary data collection: Dhaka/Savar (Dhaka division), Kurigram (Rangpur Division), Chattogram³¹ (Chattogram Division), and Sathkira (Khulna division). Given the methodology, Instrument 3 (peer-to-peer survey) was conducted in multiple locations throughout the country. Table 4.3 summarises the criteria with respect to the locations selected for the empirical phase of the research. Figure 4.1 indicates the geographical distribution of the sites.

³¹ Formerly, Chittagong.

Table 4.3: Characteristics of the selected sites based on selection criteria

Criteria	Criterion specification	Dhaka/Savar Dhaka division	Kurigram Rangpur division	Sathkira Khulna division	Chattogram Chattogram division
Geographical location	Rural		X	x	
	Urban	x			x
Economic opportunities for low-income women	Diversified industries and service jobs	x			x
	Agrarian, daily labour		X	x	
Social differences in life-styles, access to services and information	Diversified	x			x
	Restricted		X	x	
Environmental impact on household work and livelihoods	Significant, continual			x	
	Occasional		X		
	Minor	x			x
Access	Without constraint	x		x	
	Minor challenges		X	x	x
	Challenging				
Cost	Low	x		x	
	Manageable		X	x	x
	High				

4.4 Selection of respondents

In terms of the selection of individual respondents, several salient variables were prioritised, including rural/urban continuum³²; age; education/employment (proxy for class and social strata); religious affiliation; and disability. These variables were applied with the objective to ensure diversity in respondents' groups.

Instrument 1: Indigenous perceptions of WEE by low-income women and men

The participants were identified by partner NGOs in each location. Data collection focused on Muslim male and female respondents over 18 years of age selected from households living in moderate poverty and those that recently graduated from extreme poverty as per records of partner organisations involved in the selection of respondents. In total, three women's groups and three men's groups were identified for Instrument 1 (one of each per location). Each group included 8 to 12 participants.

Instrument 2: Perceptions of ideal manhood by low-income women

The female participants were identified by the partner organisations. Each session in three locations involved approximately 8-12 Muslim women. These included adult women who were at least 18 years of age and were considered low-income or poor by the partner organisations. These could be participants from local anti-poverty programmes, either the same ones from Instrument 1 or a new group.

Instrument 3: Prevalence of men's attitudes on women's economic empowerment

The Muslim male adult respondents were identified by eight peer-surveyors – adult Bangladeshi development workers. The respondents were identified over the period of five months in peer researchers' natural social circles, including family members, friends and acquaintances, service providers and public workers. The peer-surveyors targeted adult Muslim men in multiple urban and rural locations across Bangladesh. The assumption was that each peer-surveyors would reach 8-12 men.

³² It is more appropriate to use 'continuum' instead of 'divide' as linkages between urban and rural areas tend to be fluid and continue even after outmigration to urban settlements.

Instrument 4: Construction of manhood with respect to women's economic empowerment

The participants were recruited by the author. The group of 12 men included Muslim adult men representing young men and alternative subjectivities, those considered 'mainstream', disabled men, men with varied religious affiliation (strong, moderate, weak), diverse place of residence, and lower and higher levels of education corresponding with a different social class. Out of 12 respondents, five men were development workers to complement the finding from Instrument 5. Three respondents were the authors' acquaintances, six were referred to the author and four were randomly selected based on the key selection criteria during the author's travel in Bangladesh.

Instrument 5: Men's interpretations of WEE strategies and egalitarian gender relations

The analysis aimed to select at least one Muslim male development worker in four development institutions with programmes in various divisions of Bangladesh, including at least one organisation with the head office outside the capital Dhaka to expand geographical coverage. The participating organisations were purposely identified by the author. Out of five respondents, two were the authors acquaintances and three were referred to her through her local networks.

Instrument 6: Feedback on a men's empowerment framework.

The Delphi method applied in the research was intended to involve two male panellists from Bangladesh and one international female development worker with work experience in Bangladesh and South Asia to provide feedback on data analysis and support the design of a men's empowerment framework. Ultimately, one male Bangladeshi expert and one non-Bangladeshi female panellist took part in the feedback process. The panellists were purposely identified by the author based on the selection criteria.

Figure 4.1: Locations of primary data collection – Instruments 1, 2, 4 and 5



Source: Maps of World, 2019

4.5 Instruments of data collection

4.5.1 Introduction and planning

The selection of research methodology followed the tradition of the Q-squared approach to social research that combines the advantages of qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection (Hulme, 2007, p.13), insights on reflexive participatory methodology in social research (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Chambers, 2017), and a feminist inquiry of masculinities giving a voice to men. The preference of applying participatory primary data instruments was also informed by the objective of minimising “the potential imperialism of academic theory” (Kouritzin, 2000, p.21).

For practical reasons, the field work part of the primary data collection process was split into several chronological phases, while data analysis was structured as a continuous process throughout all phases, including data cleaning, data analysis, triangulation and formulation of final findings. The data collection was conducted over the course of ten months, with three field visits to Bangladesh. The schedule was adapted to avoid periods that were considered unsuitable for fieldwork – the General Elections held in Bangladesh (30.12. 2018), Holy Month of Ramadan (6.5 - 5.6.2019) and major Muslim holidays: including Eid-al-Fitr (4. - 5.6.2019) and Eid-al-Adha (11. - 12.8.2019). The request for ethical approval to conduct the primary data collection was submitted and approved by the UCC Social Research Ethics Committee.

Key phases of data collection:

Phase 1 (December 2018 – February 2019): field preparatory work; identification of volunteers, locations and respondents; training on peer-to-peer methodology

Phase 2 (March 2019): Instrument 3 (launch of Peer-to-Peer Survey)

Phase 3 (April 2019): Instrument 1 (Focus Group Discussions on Women’s Economic Empowerment); Instrument 2 (Ideal Husband); Instrument 4 (Life Histories)

Phase 4 (April – August 2019): Instrument 3 (continuation); data verification; submission of peer-to peer survey data forms

Phase 5 (August – September 2019): Instrument 5 (Institutional Analysis of Women’s Economic Empowerment); submission of peer-to- peer survey forms;

Instrument 6 (July – September 2020): Delphi method

4.5.2 Indigenous perceptions of women's economic empowerment

The idea for Instrument 1 (Annex 3 and 4) came directly from the research carried out by Kabeer (2011, 2012), Ahmed (2008, 2014) and Lipi (2016), while also drawing on Sen (1999) and other research on agency and performativity (Butler, 2007). Sen's capability approach advocates the expansion of capabilities or functionings that a person has reasons to value – in other words, actual valuable options depending on one's context. However, internalised oppression within a specific context may interfere with one's judgement, which can limit one's perception of freedoms to aspire to (Pheterson; 1986; Rowland, 1995; Phillips, 2004). On the other hand, Ahmed (2008, p.133) notes that “the presentation of indigenous definitions [of empowerment] should *not*³³ mean that practitioners have to agree with them. But it is imperative that they seek to understand how their clients perceive things”. Applying conceptual theoretical explorations of the notion of women's economic empowerment (WEE) combined with the subjective understanding of the female respondents, cross-checked with the perceptions of male counterparts, can also address some of the inherent biases with respect to power over knowledge production (Chambers, 2017).

The use of focus groups (FGs) was selected to emphasise women's (economic) empowerment as a lived process (Cornwall, 2016) and solicit viewpoints from a social group perspective, rather than individual standpoints (Krueger and Casey, 2015). To generate valid responses, the role of a moderator was to encourage collective inter-subjective discussion within each group and avoid interviewing individuals. This means that the response was solicited as a product generated through group dynamics and expressed opinions, while the moderator's role was to “encourage both cohesion and confrontation of opinions within the group” (Acocella, 2012, p.1129). The key *collective* questions maintained the focus on empowerment as a transformative process leading to positive structural changes for women beyond women's immediate needs.

Further, as the concept of WEE empowerment is alien to Bengali, the FG's script was adapted and used debriefing pauses throughout the discussion to verify meanings and cluster key ideas. The discussion in each group was led by a Bengali-speaking moderator, who received written instructions and a verbal briefing on the methodology from the author. This approach mitigated the language barrier between the author and the participants and their asymmetrical relationship

³³ Emphasis in the original.

(Acocella, 2011, p1129), but also maintained the chain effect of ideas flow (Acocella, 2012, p.1132). The author mainly fulfilled the role of an observer, taking notes of group dynamics. In all groups, the meetings' proceedings were interpreted consecutively to the author without interrupting discussions.

When the FGs were complete, the raw data were analysed through the transcript of the recorded discussions that provided the basis for the interpretation of discursively constructed meanings. This involved identifying consensus in the positions of the groups, highlighting outliers or particular areas of disagreement and the accounts by the female and male groups, in addition to geographical locations. The clustering of the key ideas during FGs assisted in identifying internal consistency and common threads as well as frequency of certain concepts used during FGs. Field notes provided essential complementary information on the groups' dynamics, including whether some of the opinions should be invalidated, for instance, due to excessive individual imposition.

Each session with separate men's and women's groups participants lasted between 60 to 90 minutes and was organised in an accessible communal space allowing participation of respondents with disabilities and to audio-record each discussion.

4.5.3 Visualisation of ideal manhood by low-income women

Instrument 2 (Annex 5) draws on research by Ahmed (2008, 2014) concerning women's expectations from men in supporting women's economic involvement and a formulation of a vision of ideal manhood in low-income Muslim communities of Bangladesh. It was also informed by theoretical inquiry into Islamic and Muslim masculinities (Ouzgan, 2006; DeSondy, 2013; Anwary, 2015; Hughes, 2017; Kabasakal Arat and Hasan, 2017; Hasan, Aggleton and Persson, 2018).

The central focus of Instrument 2 expands the scope of inquiry explored by Ahmed (2008, 2014) by paying specific attention to women's expectations related to women's economic involvement, including, but not limited to, division of labour, skills and competences, fatherhood, safety, asset control and their ownership, mobility, trust and emotional support. The discursive process in three women's groups provided data on women's construction of masculinities, while at the same time led to identification of challenges faced by women and

strategic objectives with respect to masculinities that could improve women's economic empowerment.

Instrument 2 was planned as a follow-up session upon the completion of Instrument 1. Women's views were solicited through facilitated visualisation on pre-defined questions by using visual aids, such as drawing and attaching meaning to cut-out images from local newspapers. Facilitated visualisation techniques help individuals and groups in envisioning a desired outcome. This method was selected not only to stimulate discussion among women on a potentially sensitive and complex topic but also maintain the focus of the discussion on the main subject. It was also expected it would reduce some language barriers between women and the author.

Each session was planned as a 60 to 90-minute focus group discussion facilitated by a Bengali-speaking (female) moderator, who received written instructions and a briefing by the authors on how to conduct a session. A volunteer provided consecutive interpretation to the author without interrupting discussions. Each session was audio-recorded and later transcribed in English. The author occasionally assisted the facilitator and took notes on group dynamics.

The original plan was to end the meeting with imagery depicting an ideal Muslim man/husband and discuss women's actual situations within their household, however, only one group produced an image. In two groups it was decided to proceed with the session without producing an image as the participants struggled to comprehend the task. As in the FGs in Instrument 1, the facilitator read the consent form and explained it to the group before asking participants to sign it. Following all FG sessions, the respondents received soap or shampoo as a small token of appreciation for taking time for the discussion.

4.5.4 Prevalence of men's attitudes on women's economic empowerment

Instrument 3 (Annex 6) is based on the research on anthropological and ethnographic approaches to soliciting information from particular peer target groups. It draws on peer-to-peer methodologies, which claim people are more likely to provide candid views when they interact with the members of their peer group. Such methods are normally used for in-depth investigation of certain views. The adapted version applied in this research used a questionnaire-based survey with informal interactions between the surveyor and the respondent to qualify responses, if required. Involvement of peer-to-peer surveyors allowed the collection

of socially valid responses across a wide spectrum of men as it was carried out over an extended period of time, in diverse settings and geographical locations of Bangladesh.

The survey statements focused on men's perspectives on personal and structural patriarchal systems, including, for example, men's perception of their patriarchal privilege; male breadwinners and alternative household models; value of women's economic contribution to family wellbeing; fatherhood (especially of girls), men's involvement in care and household work; gender relations in the workplace; asset ownership; violence against women; women's mobility; etc. The survey was based on statements that required a respondent to select from four options: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree. These selections were later coded based on a matrix which allocated a mark on an ascending scale of *social progressiveness* (0, 1, 2, 3). In addition to respondents, surveyors were also an important indirect source of valid research information as observers of the process of data collection.

The adapted method purposely aimed to identify peer researchers with varied geographical and social background, whose native language was Bengali, and who had a good command of English. To avoid a social class/viewpoint bias in identifying respondents, surveyors underwent a half-day's training, provided by the author, to minimise potential biases in identifying and interacting with respondents, while the author provided backstopping in case they required any clarifications. The male surveyors recruited for the survey were Bengali employees of a non-governmental organisation with social contacts across various parts of Bangladesh. All were former colleagues of the author and agreed to conduct a survey free of charge. It was estimated that over the period of up to six months, 8-10 male peer-to-peer surveyors would collectively conduct a survey amongst 80-100 respondents. It was estimated that completion of the survey, available in both Bengali and English versions, would take approximately 30 minutes, though no prescribed time was given. Each hard or soft copy of a survey form with debriefing notes was submitted to the author for analysis.

4.5.5 Construction of manhood with respect to women's economic empowerment

Instrument 4 (Annex 7) was developed by using the life history methodology applied in anthropological, sociological and ethnographic studies. According to Kouritzin (2000, p.22) "engaging life history research encourages reflexivity and a holistic concept of the self and others. It offers us a new lens for our social science glasses. Life histories encourage the inclusion of marginalized voices, multiple never-ending data analyses, historically grounded

records, and the chance to document inaudible, unobservable subjectivities". It is a participatory research method, often used to make a stand against positivist, ahistorical modernist methodologies, such as randomised control trials carried out by a narrow group of elite researchers (Kouritzin, 2000; Chambers, 2017). This method does not require control for variables; in fact, a diversity of variables is part of the narration-interpretation process (Kouritzin, 2000, p.22). According to Hulme (2007, p.13), the life history method works best when combined with other instruments of inquiry. Kouritzin (2000, p.4) suggests that not only are findings from life histories triangulated with data acquired through other methods, but the product of life history research itself should be based on using multiple sources of evidence to verify information provided by the respondent. Contradictory and ambivalent statements by the respondent are natural part of the research process.

Life history research involves listening to emic perspectives on social constructs and critical interpretive analysis of contextualised relational aspects emerging through the narration (Kouritzin, 2000, p.4). The process and the result of that process extend beyond a conventional method of interviewing the respondent which often happens in isolation from salient contextual information. Instead, a contemporary grounded narration of an individual life history intertwines with wider socio-economic and historical developments of a nation³⁴ (Kouritzin, 2000, p.15). Lewis (2008, p.562) notes the significance of the respondent's agency operating within wider structures impacting individuals lives, echoing performative interpretations of agency (Butler, 2007).

In a practical process, it is critical to establish trust and responsibility between the researcher and the respondent and avoid a 'patient-expert' relationship (Kouritzin, 2000, p.20). The conditions set for the narration should lead to the respondent's positive perception of having their story heard. The actual meeting is preceded by a request to identify personal memorabilia and other objects stimulating the narration process. The respondent also receives detailed explanation on how the method works and what it should lead to. The discursive product is then a shared objective of both the researcher and the researched.

This research uses life histories to produce men's own temporal account of critical life events, emotions and viewpoint formulation (Connell, 2005) allowing men to delve into various issues based on their own choice, make their own associations and linkages with events and issues.

³⁴ Emphasis added by the author.

Instrument 4 specifically aimed to explore men's experience with maleness and normative masculinities; men's role models as social agents of masculinity; impactful events, processes and experiences that shaped, strengthened or affected men's experience of masculinities across domains of rearing, marriage, sex/sexuality, parenting and work/social networks (Poudyal, 2000, p.77). Other relevant themes further included men's experience of inequality; professional experience and working with women; attitudes and beliefs about relations between women and men; experience of various forms of violence; and rationale and motivations for adopting a more gender-equitable lifestyle.

The research process included perspectives held by younger men, building on a generational investigation of masculinities and gender norms in Bangladesh (Hasan, Aggleton and Persson, 2018). The inclusion of young men allowed exploration of their positioning with regard to the spectrum of masculinities, especially with regard to 'tradition' and 'modernity', while keeping in mind these notions are not binary and can occur simultaneously and in asymmetry with economic development and societal transformations. The inquiry also touched upon the impact of social media on formulation of viewpoints as critical actors in social discourse in recent years, including in Bangladesh.

Meetings with purposely selected male respondents followed a loose script with pre-defined questions lasting approximately 120 minutes but adjusted to each respondent's tempo of the narration. In several cases, further conversations were required to clarify some information. The meetings were conducted in English or Bengali and were audio-recorded. The respondents chose a location of the meetings – normally a social space familiar to a particular respondent. The findings were anonymised.

4.5.6 Men's interpretations of women's economic empowerment strategies

Instrument 5 (Annex 8) involves an analysis of men's perspectives on strategies, policies and plans concerning women's economic empowerment. It was carried out through interviews with senior male development workers, complemented by desk review of documents provided by selected non-governmental organisations.

The inquiry applied a human rights perspective on women's economic empowerment, as opposed to the efficiency and instrumentalist approaches to institutional strategies. Human rights approaches to women's economic empowerment aim at generating decent and

sustainable jobs, with social and economic security, allowing work and life balance, and offering liveable wages, comparable to those earned by male counterparts; employment is diversified away from vertical and horizontal segregation, in particular away from sectors yielding limited wages and growth potential; facilitating women's employment opportunities in gender non-stereotypical sectors, freed from negative externalities, such as lack of safety and health hazards (Kabeer, 2009, 2011; Hunt and Samman, 2016).

Ultimately, approaches should incorporate strategies that look beyond satisfaction of women's immediate needs but contribute to transformation of unequal socio-economic power relations that sustain gender inequalities (Molyneux, 1985; Moser, 1989). Strategies are informed by gender analyses of unequal gender division of labour and linkages between reproduction and productive economy; a male breadwinner household model and women's direct and indirect labour market discrimination are challenged; strategies pro-actively work against cementing gender stereotypes such as altruistic mother and victimisation of women. In addition, organisations understand the value of exploring masculinities and positive contributions of men in enhancing women's economic freedoms.

To carry out the analysis systematically and comprehensively, a checklist of key information required was developed to guide the interviews with male staff. Each interview was conducted in English and transcribed from an audio-recording, which could be later reviewed by the respondents. The respondents' views were complemented by men's perspectives on the prospects of egalitarian gender relations in Bangladesh obtained through life history narrations (Instrument 4).

4.5.7 Feedback on a men's empowerment framework

The final stage of the data analysis involved online discussions with two purposely selected panellists, out of the planned three, with expertise in women's economic empowerment and related fields (Annex 7). The involvement of the panellists contributed to the formulation of the men's empowerment framework discussed in Chapter 8, requiring two rounds of questions and answers (Q&A). It was facilitated by formulating guiding questions, further adjusted during the Q&A process.

The Delphi method is suitable when searching for and validating solutions to complex problems. Panel members can be in different locations and Q&A are delivered individually,

reducing biases stemming from conformity to majoritarian opinion. The objective of Instrument 6 was to cross-check conclusions and design realistic dimensions of engagement with men (Barker et al., 2005, p.159), while taking into consideration a diversity of standpoints and socio-economic, cultural and religious locations.

4.6 Dealing with constraints, limitations, gaps and bias in the data collection and the analysis

One of the main challenges of the study, encountered from the onset of the research process, was its multilingual context. Such context could exacerbate the semantic ambiguity (Kouritzin, 2000, p.28; Acocella, 2012, p. 1131) of the research. While a sufficient range of secondary data was available in the English language, spoken by the author as her second language, the primary data collection posed more constraints. Most urban respondents and those with higher education had a good command of English, however, a substantial proportion of the respondents only spoke Bengali and/or a local dialect. To address these constraints, several strategies were adopted by the author to minimise potential misconceptions in the research process.

Firstly, all formal documents, such as a survey sheet and consent forms, were translated in Bengali and reinterpreted in local dialects during data collection, if required. Further, all meetings with respondents who did not have a command of English were carried out in Bengali/local dialect and facilitated by a Bengali/dialect speaker, while consecutive interpretation was provided to the author. In addition, all sessions were audio-recorded and later transcribed in English, followed by verification and data cleaning. Further, during sessions conducted in English, on-the-spot clarifications and debriefing were used to verify meanings in cases when statements were unclear. The author also took notes during all but one sessions due to health issues, which was useful for verifying transcripts from Bengali/dialect to English. The peer-to-peer survey (Research Instrument 3) was carried out by English/Bengali speaking volunteers who could use an English or a Bengali survey form. Respondents in Instrument 4 and 5 were also invited to verify a transcript, including non-English speakers.

Some challenges also emerged as a result of lower levels of education and cognitive skills by some low-income respondents, particularly among women. This became especially evident while collecting data for the analysis of ideal manhood (Research Instrument 2) – a number of respondents struggled to provide their opinions and to use visual imagery to express their perspectives. While initially this appeared to be a methodological error, it was soon realised that such expressive silences encountered in FGs could provide information useful for the analysis, although not the one that had been envisioned. For example, women's struggle to discuss women's employment was, among other aspects, linked to women's limited experience with women's productive work and lack of exposure to the world beyond their immediate

surroundings. Illiterate rural women who had minimal schooling or none at all also rarely had a chance to use creative expressive tools, unlike educated urban women. This implied a different level of opportunities for women to build their cognitive and communication skills. Analysing such ‘non-data’ drew partially on a study of the Subaltern by Spivak (1988).

The author did not register significant evidence of respondents either avoiding the subject of the study or demonstrating hostility. In fact, there was only one case where one of the respondents in life history narrations (Research Instrument 4) raised questions over interpreting his views from the perspective of equality between women and men as a positive social goal (he was against such equality). With regard to other male and female respondents, both educated and low-income, based on the author’s (subjective) field observation, the women appeared to seek comradery with the author, particularly when making complaints about men, while the male participants were eager to present and discuss their views. In some instances, particularly in FGs carried out in Bengali, the respondents (both male and female) were so immersed in lively discussions that they completely ignored the presence of the author. (Field Notes, 2019)

Prior to conducting field data collection, the researcher submitted an application to the Social Research Ethics Committee at the University College Cork. Part of the application involved the design of consent forms, translated in Bengali, which were distributed to research participants. The consent forms ensured a voluntary nature of participating in the research and explained how respondents can withdraw from the study. During the data collection, following the recommended ethical framework, the researcher disclosed her intentions of using the data through the research process, including written and verbal assurances of maintaining anonymity of all respondents. Contact numbers were made available to all respondents – depending on the research instrument, the researcher either provided her contact details or participants could contact one of the collaborating organisations. In addition, all volunteers, who participated in the study, were briefed about ethical standards of the research by the author, including the request to destroy any data upon the completion of their tasks. Ensuring anonymity was done also with the objective to solicit candid responses. Naturally, despite these measures, there may have been instances when the respondents may not have been entirely truthful in expressing their views. Such doubt (where it can be ascertained) can also be informative (Kouritzin, 2000, p. 24). For example, the analysis of the data collected through the survey (Research Instrument 3) raised some doubts with respect to men’s responses to

certain statements (discussed in detail in Chapter 7). As recommended by Kouritzin (2000, p.24), this was acknowledged and incorporated in the analysis of the results.

Another issue the author grappled with in the initial stage of the research process was respondent samples, particularly given financial implications of field data collection in Bangladesh. The author was acutely aware that if a sample was ‘too small’, it may raise doubts about representativeness of data and the validity of the analysis. To resolve this problem, the author opted for several complementary instruments, which not only allowed data triangulation and thus a better construction of argumentation, but also the possibility to apply these instruments simultaneously (Instruments 1 and 2; Instruments 4 and 5). In addition, Instruments 3, 5 and 6 could be fully or partially conducted remotely reducing the overall costs of data collection. As the author was employed in the South Asia region at the time of data collection, it was feasible to conduct three short-term visits rather than collect all data at once. This also facilitated the data analysis process and reduced the author’s workload as data were collected and analysed in stages rather than at once.

Furthermore, all transcripts submitted by Bengali volunteers carried some grammatical and syntactical errors, which added to possible misinterpretations in respondents’ views. While these posed some challenges with respect to data authenticity (Kouritzin, 2000, p.27), the author opted to take a two-pronged approach to resolve this problem – verify those statements that were not comprehensible and then subsequently clean the transcripts for grammatical and syntactical errors, while maintaining the meaning of statements. In the author’s view, the most important consideration was to capture the connotation of statements by respondents and present these in a way that would facilitate readers to follow arguments, and this required cleaning of grammar and syntax.

Linked to the above, as discussed previously, the study is explicit in acknowledging authorial control (Lewis, 2008, p.562) in the *discursive* research process, interpreted through the lens of a feminist scholar guided by a particular value system. Hence, in such post-modern, post-structural perspectives on social research, it was neither possible to study ‘objective’ reality, nor to find ‘objective’ results. This research study is a discursively constructed product and it should be understood as such. However, this does not mean the author should not aim for as much authenticity in data collection as possible. This, after all, is in line with the universal relevance of reflexivity and self-critical epistemological awareness (Chambers, 2017). This includes reducing potential biases; although maintaining a strict rigour, as understood within

scientific and medical, rather than sociological, research, with controlled or controllable conditions, may not be possible (Chambers, 2017, p.95).

It can also be useful to consider the possible impact on group dynamics of a female Bengali facilitator and interpreter in male FGs, and a male interpreter in female FGs. First, the appointment of facilitators and interpreters was driven by availability of volunteers to carry out such tasks with limited cost. All volunteers were employees of local non-governmental organisations who were seen as a cost-effective choice in comparison to hiring professional service providers. Further, two male interpreters in four female FGs (two locations) were local project staff who had worked with the female respondents previously. In addition, during FG proceedings, the researcher and the interpreter were located outside of the women's discussion circle in order not to disturb the discussion. In the third location, the interpreter and the author played initially a more active role to support the facilitator who struggled to cope with one outspoken (educated) participant, hindering other illiterate women in expressing themselves. There was also a need for more debriefing questions from the author as the women often spoke at once and statements were lost. The proceedings in this female FG were less than ideal but this was not due to the presence of a male interpreter. The intention was to have male facilitators in all male groups. However, in one male group, a female volunteer moderated the discussion, while her male colleague provided consecutive interpretation. This was mainly due to the fact that the female volunteer had limited command of English. Her facilitation skills were excellent and contributed to collecting rich data. The remaining two male groups were facilitated by male facilitators from the area; in one group a female interpreter was used. She was a local staff member who had been working in the local site of the FG for a while and the participants were familiar with her. Given the above, it does not appear the arrangements with respect to facilitators and interpreters altered the FGs' dynamics in any significant way.

From the researcher's perspective, it was crucial to provide voice to both women and men, which was incorporated in the selection of a particular research methodology. Four out of six methods can be considered participatory (Instruments 1, 2, 4 and 5), while the peer-to peer survey (Instrument 3) also provided some scope for interaction. This approach is consistent with the notion of the democracy of the ground promoted by Chambers (2017, p.91). In addition, economic empowerment of low-income women is impacted by attitudes and behaviours of not only men in women's families, but also of men in wider society. While it was not possible to capture all such men's categories (their list can be endless), the research attempted to capture some of these perspectives through a broad-based survey (Instrument 3)

complemented by specific attention to men in development institutions (Instrument 4 and 5). It would have been useful to also involve, at least, men in the role of employers, those employed in public administration, policy-makers, local politicians, and male service providers with potential to provide services to low-income women's entrepreneurs. The identification of such respondents would have required a longer presence in the country and additional resources, which were not available to the author, given the self-financed nature of this research project.

Furthermore, given the locations where the main part of the research took place, it is suitable to comment on any potential environmental challenges affecting the research process. As noted elsewhere, the author was familiar with the country context, which facilitated management aspects of data collection. While there are frequent extreme climatic events in Bangladesh, during the time of the data collection these did not occur and the process largely followed the original plan. However, the author was unable to complete the observation of one male FG due to health problems given excessive heat and food poisoning. The author had to rely on the interpreter's observation and the audio recording and some quality gaps were encountered.

In addition, the analytical part of the research was ongoing when the Covid-19 pandemic struck. As some of the research material (original survey forms, photo-documentation, reference literature) was still in Bangladesh, the author was not able to recover it, having left the country earlier with the intention of returning, but this was not possible due to the border closure. Therefore, the analytical part of the survey results (Research Instrument 3) was slightly altered.

4.7 Quality controls applied in the data collection and the analysis

In the final section of this chapter, it is useful to discuss several aspects related to quality controls applied to the research process, particularly with respect to securing data, data quality, and the consideration of reciprocity in the research process. Firstly, following the technical recommendations with respect to data management, the author maintained both digital and hard copies of the research material. Audio-recordings, along with other digital data, were stored on a personal computer and an external hard-drive. All volunteer interpreters who also translated transcripts from Instruments 1-5 were requested to destroy recordings and the transcripts in line with ethical standards set for voluntary participation. All volunteers were employees of local non-governmental organisations with previous experience in conducting social research, which facilitated their understanding of complying with ethical research requirements.

Respecting the anonymity and privacy of respondents was covered in the training that the author provided to each volunteer. Specific training was provided to the volunteers administering the peer-to-peer survey, especially with respect to maintaining a balance in respondent selection. A detailed written guideline on how to conduct a peer-to-peer survey was also shared. Some challenges, discussed in more detail in Chapter 7, were, however, encountered, particularly with respect to a presumable bias towards targeting urban men with higher education. This could not be verified fully for a number of reasons. A high number of forms did not provide demographic data on respondents, while a large part of the original survey forms could not be retrieved from Bangladesh due to the Covid-19 travel restrictions. The results analysis in Chapter 7 considers this potential bias.

Further, in order to facilitate the organisation of focus groups (Instruments 1 and 2), detailed guidelines were prepared and shared with the organisations and individuals supporting recruitment of participants and identifying suitable sites in pre-selected districts (Annex 3-5). A similar guideline was also submitted to all respondents taking part in the analysis of men's interpretations of WEE strategies (Instrument 5), who also received a check-list of information sought by the author facilitating the preparation for an interview. Although a detailed guideline was also prepared for life history narrations (Instrument 4), the author opted for a verbal explanation of what it involved. This was done with the objective of limiting the perception of unequal power relations between the researcher and the researched that would have been contradictory to the ethos of this research method.

Two additional points can be made with respect to processing data from the survey (Instrument 3) and the use of professional services. As the peer-to-peer survey yielded a large amount of data, it was originally planned to request each volunteer to enter data in an online database using a coding matrix, which allocated each selected statement a particular value, later used in the results analysis. However, this could yield a high degree of erroneous entries. For that reason, the forms shared (as a scanned or hard copy) by the volunteers were processed by the author, who also carried out several rounds of data checking. This was time-consuming but, ultimately, contributed to better data quality. Once the two Excel databases with manually inputted data (selection of statements and coded values) were ready, Excel was used to run a statistical analysis.

It would be preferable that such time-consuming tasks were outsourced to professional services, however, this was not possible due to the costs involved. While all volunteers provided enormous support and were keen to take part in this research as they considered its theme ‘novel’ for Bangladesh (Field Notes, 2019), professional services would have been much more rapid in submitting transcripts which, it is assumed, would have required less data cleaning. Given the budget constraints, it was, however, not possible to hire professional interpreters/translators. On the other hand, using professionals alien to a context and/or to a respondent, would have had an impact on the overall dynamics of the process, with a possible restriction of candid information exchange, which was less of a concern in the case of locally known volunteers.

Furthermore, the author considered the implications of reciprocity and ethical considerations of involving local civil society members. While the author benefited personally and professionally from the research process, it was deemed appropriate to create learning opportunities for fellow development workers, while researching the subject of democratic masculinities conducive to women’s economic empowerment. In fact, following the field data collection, three partner organisations expressed interest in obtaining the final study, two of which indicated direct applicability of the research in their organisational programmes. Such optimisation of trade-offs is also part of social research based on Complexity Paradigms (Chambers, 2017, p.97).

4.8 The author's positionality

For the author, the subject of the study was simultaneously personal and professional, including, but not limited to, her ties with the group of male volunteers as well as the country. The impetus to focus on this particular research topic came directly from the author's two decades of professional/personal experience of working in a number of humanitarian and development organisations in Asia. This included over seven years in Muslim communities of Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Myanmar, in addition to dozens of short visits to the continent. During 2008-2020, the author spent considerable time in Bangladesh, including seven short and long-term assignments. Within this lived experience, the author encountered numerous ambiguities related to Muslim men, including with respect to men's attitudes to gender equality and their involvement in development processes as well as within personal relationships. This situated practice framed the author's approach to the theme of this study.

During the research process, the author was highly inspired by Kouritzin (2000, p. 21) and her hierarchical multiplicity of a researcher's subjectivity within a research process (human, woman, researcher). As a female, foreign, non-Muslim, feminist researcher, the author was particularly careful to avoid 'cultural arrogance' in the research process (Kouritzin, 2000, p. 26), especially when interacting with male respondents, given her positioning as a feminist Western and non-Muslim researcher. This approach resulted in a highly interactive and humane research process. Finally, as a religious dimension in studying masculinities in Bangladesh was critical, the author made efforts to educate herself about the Islamic doctrine during the research process and its various interpretations.

4.9 Summary of the methodological framework

The methodology for the empirical research prioritised a mix of data production methods with a conscious bias towards qualitative methods in line with the recommendations for knowledge production in social research (Chambers, 2017). The selected methods, used in six research instruments, included focus groups, peer-to-peer survey, life-history narrations, gender analysis, interviews, Delphi method and observation (Table 4.1). Instruments 1 and 2 were applied to identify critical aspects of WEE and idealised masculinities; Instruments 3 and 4 facilitated the analysis of gender norms, attitudes and practices related to WEE identified in the discourse by Muslim men; and Instrument 5 and 6 supported the identification of policy recommendations based on the study, including the men's empowerment framework that resulted from the research process. The study employed the multi-level data analysis. While key unit of analysis were individuals, the subject of the study was not only analysed at individual level but incorporated communal/ societal, regional and global dimensions.

The main data collection took place in four sites: Dhaka/urban zones (Dhaka division), Kurigram/rural zones (Rangpur Division), Chattogram/urban zones (Chattogram Division), and Sathkira/rural zones (Khulna division). These sites were identified by applying six specific criteria to determine suitable locations. Once the key sites of primary data collection were identified, the partner organisations supported the identification of respondents for Instruments 1 and 2. The respondents in Instrument 3 were identified by the group of peer-to-peer researchers purposely selected by the author. The respondents in Instrument 4 were identified by the author combining purposeful and random selection methods. The respondents in Instrument 5 and three panelists in Instrument 6 were also purposely selected by the author based on the pre-defined criteria.

While the author's practical experience facilitated the data collection process in Bangladesh, several challenges were encountered. Firstly, to address the study's multilingual context (English, Bengali, Slovak, local dialects in Bangladesh), the author used translation and interpretation services and local collaborators (organisations and individuals). Secondly, some challenges also emerged as a result of lower levels of education and cognitive skills by some low-income respondents, particularly among women. This was acknowledged early on in the research process and adopted as an opportunity for deeper understanding of local realities. Thirdly, the author disclosed her intentions of using the data throughout the research process, including written and verbal assurances of maintaining anonymity of all respondents and the right to withdraw from the study. Fifthly, in response to potential 'smallness' of respondent

samples, the author opted for several complementary instruments, which not only allowed data triangulation, but also the possibility to apply some instruments simultaneously and remotely, thus reducing the overall costs of the data collection process.

Concerning the qualitative aspects, the author is explicit in acknowledging that the data were interpreted through the lens of a feminist scholar guided by a particular value system. Hence, the study is a discursively constructed product. However, this did not preclude the author from aiming for as much authenticity in the data collection as possible in line with self-critical epistemological awareness and rigour as understood in Complexity Paradigms (Chambers, 2017). Finally, the use of professional services could have reduced the author's workload, particularly in entering data of the survey and making transcripts of audio-recordings in English. In this aspect, besides cost implications, the author considered reciprocity and ethical considerations of involving local civil society members in the research process. Such optimisation of trade-offs is also part of social research based on Complexity Paradigms (Chambers, 2017).

Finally, the hierarchical multiplicity of the author's subjectivity within the research process (human, woman, researcher) (Kouritzin, 2000) could result in some unintentional bias and ethical challenges; for example, when interacting with male and female Muslim respondents as a feminist Western and non-Muslim researcher. The author's consciousness about such potential challenges led to adoption of a sensitive communication approach when interacting with the respondents, which contributed to mutually positive experience during the data collection (Field Notes, 2019).

Chapter 5 Indigenous Perceptions of Women’s Economic Empowerment

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 together with Chapter 6 present the findings of empirical research on linkages between masculinities, women’s paid work, and the transformative notion of women’s economic empowerment (WEE) in the context of Bangladesh. These chapters respond to the first sub-question of the research concerned with identifying critical aspects of WEE and idealised masculinities that facilitate WEE from the perspective of indigenous low-income communities cross-examined through the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter 3. The findings presented in these chapters serve as the point of departure for a more in-depth analysis of masculinities’ positioning towards WEE in the discourse by Muslim men explored in Chapters 7-9. Chapters 7-8 respond to the second research sub-question and aim to understand what drives and inhibits men’s progressiveness on WEE. The analysis in Chapter 9 contributes towards the formulation of policy implications related to WEE originating from the exploration of Antagonist, Ally and Advocate masculinities. These are presented in the final chapter of this research, Chapter 10.

The meanings, low-income Muslim women and men attached to WEE within the framework of the WEE and masculinity theories presented in Chapter 3, were explored in the three main research sites – Dhaka, Kurigram and Sathkira. Sections 5.2 and 5.3 first briefly summarise the discourse in each focus group. Section 5.4 then discussed key characteristics of WEE identified in the indigenous discourses distinguishing psychological/personal, social and economic dimensions. Section 5.5 further builds on this analysis by exploring to what extent these indigenous discourses reflect *transformative* WEE (Cornwall, 2016). This discussion is facilitated by employing the concepts of women’s immediate needs and their distinction from strategic interests at the core of WEE (Molyneux, 1985; Moser, 1989). Finally, Section 5.6 summarises key findings from the analysis of the indigenous discourses on WEE from the perspective of the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 3.

Before the presentation of the indigenous discourses, it is worth reiterating the differences between the three locations where the data collection for Instrument 1 took place. The Dhaka/Savar can potentially offer diverse paid work options for both women and men due to the proximity to complex urban markets and urban industrialisation, supported by relatively functional public services such as electricity, water, transport, health care, etc. Urbanisation

encourages a vibrant civil society, including with respect to non-governmental organisations. In contrast to urban Savar, the Kurigram and Sathkira districts, are predominately agrarian, with petty trade, limited industrialisation concentrated in towns, and lower provision of public services, including transport, internet access, and essential services such as potable water and reliable electricity supply. Further, while flooding is common in Kurigram, the Sathkira's participants commonly mentioned wide-spread waterlogging, and related limited access to potable water, in addition to devastation caused by frequent extreme climatic events, adding to household burden.

Before proceeding to the presentation of the the study empirical findings, it should be noted that in this study men are perceived as subjects of equitable development, who can pro-actively reject patriarchy and contribute to building a gender-just society. The men that fulfil such roles are those with largely socially progressive views, attitudes and practices. Here, the concept of progressiveness is preferred to the more contentious concept of 'modernity'.

5.2 Women's focus groups

Section 5.2 is divided into three sub-sections which present the summary of the discourse in each of the three female FGs. Table 5.1 summarises key characteristics of each respondent group.

Table 5.1: Summary of the female FG respondents

Location	Number of respondents	Demographic characteristics	Type of employment	FG facilitation
Savar, Dhaka (urban) Office of Access Bangladesh	8	Over 18 years; younger, middle-aged, elderly women; care-givers of the disabled; widows; literate	1 housewife, 2 in paid contractual employment (cleaner; an office worker); 5 micro-entrepreneurs (e.g. mushroom production, a grocery shop).	Access Bangladesh ³⁵
Kurigram (rural) Open air; communal space	9	Over 18 years; younger, middle-aged, elderly women; care-givers of the disabled; semi-literate	7 micro-entrepreneurs (e.g. mobile sale of crockery and hand-made products, tailoring); 2 no paid work	Partner INGO
Sathkira (rural) A respondent's household	8	Over 18 years; younger, middle-aged, elderly; 1 divorcee	1 micro-entrepreneur, 1 paid contractual employment, 6 no paid work; 2 literate, 6 illiterate	Local partner NGO

5.2.1 Women's focus group: Dhaka

All women in the focus group agreed that employment and income brought women personal benefit, in addition to supporting their family and societal development. They noted that a single income source (earned by husband) was not sufficient to cover all family needs. Examples of women's immediate needs such as children's education and paying for medicine for a woman's mother were discussed. The women also highlighted various intangible benefits of employment and income: increased self-confidence (*'Paid work gives women confidence'*); financial independence (*'I can buy things my husband does not agree with'*); respect from immediate family and relatives (*'When a woman works, she gets more respect from her family'*) and broader community (*'Women that earn money are more respected by community people'*).

³⁵ The organisation requested to be publicly recognised for their contribution to the research.

One respondent noted that women have a lot of roles, not just that of an income earner. They also worked in their homes to carry out non-paid reproductive tasks. Combining reproductive and productive activities, especially through having a home-based job, was noted as well (*'I appreciate that I have a home-based job; I can take care of my family and household and also do some income-generating work'*). A young woman working for an NGO, however, noted that educated women should aspire to have a job outside their homes.

The question about women's and men's abilities generated a lively discussion in the group. Several women, rather confidently, claimed that there was no difference in the type of jobs man and woman could do, and added that sometimes women even performed better in a job than men. They discussed that, at present, women were doing various types of jobs that were not common just a few years back. Another respondent commented that often women assumed more responsibilities than men (*'Women take care of their family and household and also do income generating work'*).

On the other hand, the women were conscious that obtaining income by women was not without its obstacles. According to one respondent, widows like herself, had little room for rest and recuperation (*'My husband died; all responsibility is with me now. I am doing well in my mushroom business. I am busy all day long, day and night. I have to take care of my family, my household and my business as well'*). Another respondent pointed to potentially unhealthy income-generation options women are provided with (*'I am doing tailoring but my husband does not like it very much as he thinks it is bad for my health, my eyesight. But he supports me because I was very determined to continue with my business so eventually he accepted it'*).

The women further mentioned that profitability of an income-generation option helped overcome an initial lack of support by men (*'When my husband realized that I was earning money, he became supportive'*). Another respondent commented that her husband had reasoned that his wife's employment was good as it decreased pressure on him to provide for the family.

The young NGO worker, visibly emotional, narrated her personal experience with employment: *'Community people used to speak very badly about me when I started my volunteering job at an NGO. My father was very much against this work but my mother was supportive. Now I have had a [paid] job for five-six years and now my father is supportive – he can see that I am doing good work. But community people still do not like when women get educated and have a job'*.

After this respondent got married, her mother-in-law and husband forced her to wear a *hijab* covering her face and abandon colourful garments, traditional amongst Bengali women. They often complained when she needed to work during weekends and holidays. The young woman continued her job but was often chastised by (male and female) individuals from her community for not covering her face and leaving her family house for employment.

One of the respondents linked her lack of education with her limited life choices and freedoms: *'I have little education. I didn't get an opportunity to get educated. I am now a housewife – I do not earn any money and my husband does not give me any money by himself. I have to ask him for everything. I do not have freedom because I do not earn money'*.

To earn income might not mean a woman has full control of how to dispose of it, as experienced by a respondent who ran a grocery shop but her husband confiscated her earnings. Another respondent described her bargaining cooperation with her husband (*'We have an arrangement. He pays school fees and I cover the rest of family expenses'*).

The women further discussed ongoing discrimination and harassment of female workers in the labour market as an acute problem. The young NGO worker pointed to discriminatory practices by recruiters (*'The problem is also with recruiters; they do not want to recruit women, even if they have skills'*). Several respondents described examples of sexual harassment experienced by them personally or their acquaintances, especially when younger (*'I know of a friend that was offered a job by a man but he asked for sexual favours in return'*) and without a husband, perceived as a woman's protector (*'I am a widow of 13 years; some men wanted to abuse me. For a widow it is difficult to protect herself without a husband'*). Several women commented that men had a 'bad character', in contrast to women perceived to be 'good by nature'. One respondent narrated her experience with sexual harassment in a workplace:

'In 1996 after my secondary school, I wanted to get a job in a family planning programme. I was offered a job but my boss requested sexual favours. I told my male colleagues about it but instead of helping me, they turned against me. They even told my husband. Everybody was against me at work and in my family. Eventually my husband forced me to leave the job. I was blamed for everything, not my boss.'

At the close of the discussion, the group debated several strategic objectives that could support women's economic involvement. These included: universal education (*'Everybody needs to be educated – this is the most important'*); anti-discrimination legislation in the labour market; increased safety of women in public spaces, including workplace; access to credit; and access

to skills training, including business management. According to the women, NGOs should also play a crucial role in advocating for increased protection of women from violence.

5.2.2 Women's focus group: Kurigram

Overall, the Kurigram group held rather positive views on women's paid work, identifying various benefits for women themselves, their families and communities. The seven micro-business women distinguished themselves from other local women, working mostly as daily labourers or unpaid workers in small-holder agriculture. The women associated employment with earning income and having a peaceful and poverty-free family life. The three outspoken respondents from the micro-business group also emphasised the right of a woman to be economically active, have financial freedom (*'If I earn money, I can buy things'*) and to protect herself (*'My husband's family is bad. I need to be independent from them'*). They also demonstrated a strong entrepreneurial spirit when describing their business-related experience (*'If I get 1 taka, I want to make it into 2 taka'*). The women with micro-businesses were either widowed or their husbands were disabled.

Several other intangible benefits were highlighted by the FG, specifically, earning respect from one's family and men (*'Other people respect me and my family as well when I earn money'*), and having 'power' (*'If a woman has money, she has power and she can feed her family'*). According to an elderly respondent, earning money meant freedom *'to do what I want'*. The women cited various life skills that they gained as a result of their economic activity (micro-businesses); including increased self-confidence; 'understanding things'; ability to deal with one's problems; not paying attention to what others think; being more independent (socially and financially); planning for the future (e.g. by having savings and emergency fund; investing in children's education); and acting as role models for other women. The women also talked about the power of 'having money in hand' (*'Now I always have 300-400 taka in my pocket'*), which gave them self-assurance.

Women's earnings were also associated with helping others in the community, although being able to cover personal and family needs appeared to be the strongest objective for these women. Education, safety and protection of children were particularly highlighted as positive outcomes of women's earnings and savings (*'I can buy books for my children from my savings; I recently paid 700 taka for a book!'*; *'Sometimes I don't eat but I save money for children'*; *'If a woman*

makes more money, children are safer, they'll have new clothes. Their future is also secured. Future is brighter').

However, the women did not just 'sacrifice' for their children. They also expressed that they themselves deserved happiness which, in turn, positively impacted others ('*Women need to be happy for themselves and for their children*'). The women mentioned several other immediate needs that women's earning met, such as ability to buy food, including more nutritional and expensive food items including meat and fish; purchase of new and better-quality clothes, which were also associated with respect by others; and use of more expensive fuel that reduced women's workload.

One of the respondents noted that income should be earned from a regular job as '*daily labour was not good for a woman and for her family*'. Other women acknowledged that their income from micro-business could be irregular, their earnings were often low, while the cost of living was increasing ('*I have a business; sometimes I have profit, sometimes I don't*'). Not having the opportunity to earn income meant lack of money which was a cause for disrespect ('*Without money, people do not respect others*') and despair ('*If I do not have any money in my hand, I feel very bad*').

One of the participants, notably upset, described her personal story – previously she ran a micro-business but currently was unable to continue with it due to her prolonged illness. She was worried about the future of her children who were now missing out on school. Once she fell ill, she did not receive any institutional support (private or public). Another woman noted that savings from earnings were a woman's safety net that could prepare a woman to deal with her illness and other problems.

The women confidently declared that men and women were equally capable of doing the same job and there were no obstacles for women's economic engagement. One woman emphasised that if a woman was motivated, she could do anything. When pressed to continue the discussion, several hindrances emerged. The women mentioned that doing the same work as men did not mean equal pay. Furthermore, husbands and other relatives often prevented women from seeking work outside their village. The women working as itinerant saleswomen narrated frequent encounters with negative attitudes and harassment. In some instances, the women were insulted and called by denigrating names ('*Some people treat us as cattle*'). Some were also threatened by physical violence, if they ever returned to certain locations with their goods. The outspoken participants, however, also talked about their personal fortitude in the face of

these challenges (‘*A lot of people say bad things about us who work outside [their village], but we do not listen to them*’). One respondent described how she strategically called on her insulters and reminded them that they, too, had mothers and sisters and would not want them to be disrespected. According to the women, it was mostly ‘older people’ that held these negative views and who insisted that a job in a garments factory in Dhaka would be a more respectable way of earning income for these women than working as saleswomen.

Lack of perceived respectability associated with itinerant saleswomen and daily wage workers generated a lively discussion. One of the women cited an example of her daughter whose marriage proposal was cancelled once the future family-in-law learned about the woman’s micro-business as an itinerant saleswoman. Another woman’s children asked their mother to abandon her business as it gave them ‘shame’ in the eyes of their peers. The two women with disabled husbands discussed how they were exposed to sexual harassment (‘*Some people [men] tell me: your husband is disabled, you come to me [to have a sexual relationship]. This happens very often*’). The women made a clear link between women’s employment, respect, mobility and their safety (‘*She needs to be respected by the community. If she does bad things, she will not be respected. There is a safety problem – women working outside will not be protected*’).

During the discussion, one of the participants insisted that women should have a ‘proper’ job, i.e. a job accepted by society (*Old people can work outside; not young girls. They only go out to earn money because there is a need, poverty*; ‘*If a woman works as a tailor or in an office, this is fine. Not as daily labourer – this is shameful*’). However, various women responded that they would like to have a ‘proper’ job, for example in a factory, instead of what they were currently doing, but such jobs were not available in their area and migration to Dhaka was not an option for them due to their care responsibilities.

Most of the women perceived social changes that were having a positive impact on women’s earning possibilities (‘*Many women now are doing shop-keeping which was impossible a few years back*’; ‘*Even tea stalls [previously exclusively men’s spaces] are now run by women*’). However, they were also aware that, in their locality, poor women’s employment choices were restricted due to limited options open to them in a local, mostly agrarian, economy.

5.2.3 Women's focus group: Sathkira

The woman working for a local NGO and the woman engaged in home-based income generation were the most articulate advocates of having paid employment but other women shared similar views (*'I would advise all women to have a job'; 'Women should work outside [to have a paid job]. Children are asking us to buy things for them but we have no money. Then they get upset'*). While practical reasons of escaping poverty (*'We need to work to save our family from poverty'*) and supplementing the husband's income (*'My husband cannot provide for all necessities of our family. Children's study is very costly'*) were cited at first, other benefits followed. These mostly focused on having (financial) independence from their husband (*'When you do not have a job, you depend on your husband'; 'I feel independent. I can buy something for myself and the kids; it makes me happy'*), respect (*'My husband is happy that I have a job. I am respected. I can buy clothes for me and my children'*), and improved relationships (*'My husband loves me more now because I earn money and help him'*).

The NGO worker was particularly content with her employment, although she also experienced lack of social acceptance (*'I enjoy working outside of my home. I am not disconnected from everything. At start, my husband was against it, but now he understands that I can also earn money. But neighbours are still against it.'*). Another respondent highlighted a woman's right to have control over earned income (*'If a woman earns money, she should be able to make decisions how to spend it'*), while the woman with the home-based business noted that she gave her earnings to her husband, keeping a small proportion for herself and for saving up for her daughter's wedding.

Though the women at first discussed that they were as capable as men in taking up any job, and various possibilities for women to earn income were mentioned (tailoring, hospital nurse, NGOs, fish pond farming, brick kilns), the group concluded that they were only able to do what their education and skills allowed. The group also asserted that men did not influence their decisions about undertaking paid work, however, the later discussion was not as reassuring. A number of hindrances to accessing paid jobs in their area were discussed, in addition to lacking education and skills. Women's household responsibilities, particularly, care for children, were mentioned as one of the main obstacles. This involved not having sufficient time to engage in paid work as well as family resistance (*'Family is against women working. Woman needs to be with her children. She has no time to have a job outside of her family'; 'Often if one part of family agrees, the other part is against it'*). The women perceived community members as a

particular hindrance for women to engage in paid work, especially when carried out outside of their homes. Immediate family might be supportive of women's employment, but community pressure can make relatives change their mind.

A young divorcee narrated her specific concerns: with her one-year old daughter she lost her home following divorce and had no financial support. She would like to find some way to earn income but had nobody to take care of her child. She noted that if she had a supportive husband, she would be able to get a job. The NGO worker noted that she often relied on the help of her children as a coping strategy to fulfil her household responsibilities.

The women further discussed a widespread problem of (unlawful) dowry inflicted on women, noting that a lot of men marry only to get access to the woman's family money. They also raised the problem of forced early marriage imposed on young girls, attributing it to poverty, which can result in violence in such marriage. The women also feared abandonment and a practice of a husband marrying another woman, if he was not 'satisfied' with his current wife. According to the women, public opinion condemning survivors of sexual violence (women) were also the reason why women did not seek help but opt to run away from their village or take their own life.

Furthermore, the women linked inadequate public services with their household burden that prevented them from having paid work (*'Women need to work a lot at home. In this area, water is a big problem. It can take me three hours to bring water home. Sometimes even as much as five hours. How can I have time to have a job?'; 'We do not have electricity. It is time consuming to do household work'*). One respondent also noted a case of a local NGO, which recently distributed electric tailoring machines to women as a more efficient option than a manual model, but these were not used due to lacking electricity.

Seeking employment through migration was also discussed but largely perceived as a precarious option for women. The group mentioned rumours of women being killed or forced into prostitution in big cities. Locally available employment options were also seen as hazardous – for example, brick kilns were extreme pollutants and harmed women's health, while working as maids for wealthier households exposed women to sexual harassment and violence. Lack of industry in the area was underlined as one of the reasons for limited access to decent jobs for women.

Similarly, as in the previous groups, the women advocated for increased protection from violence and having access to education and skills to enhance their economic involvement. One

woman highlighted that having an educated husband can be a way for women to access knowledge. The women further considered a husband's help with childcare and household chores as essential to allow them to have paid employment.

5.3 Men's focus groups

Section 5.3 is divided into three sub-sections which present the summary of the discourse in each of the three male FGs. Table 5.2 summarises key characteristics of each group.

Table 5.2: Summary of the male FG respondents

Location	Number of respondents	Demographic characteristics	FG facilitation
Savar, Dhaka (urban) Office of Access Bangladesh	7	Over 18 years; younger, middle-aged, elderly; married; 3 disabled; literate	Access Bangladesh ³⁶
Kurigram (rural) Open air; communal space	9	Over 18 years; younger, middle-aged, elderly; 8 married, 1 single; 2 disabled; 6 literate, 3 semi-literate	Partner INGO
Sathkira (rural) Open air; communal space	12	Over 18 years; 2 young, 9 middle-aged, 1 elderly; married; 1 disabled; 10 literate, 2 semi-literate	Local partner NGO

5.3.1 Men's focus group: Dhaka

The initial question about women's economic engagement generated broadly positive responses by men with various rationales (*'When I am sick, who would run our shop? Women should also work. My daughter should also get a job after finishing her studies'*; *'There should not be discrimination in the workplace, whether to employ a woman or a man; both should work'*; *'When a woman works, she can support her family. But there are also problems when women want to work – family does not always support a woman'*; *'I have two sons and they do not work but my wife is earning money and so is my daughter'*). Further on, the three men

³⁶ The organisation requested to be publicly recognised for their contribution to the research.

added that having paid employment provided women with independence, while another three men insisted that women should only work when the family was poor.

The young disabled man stood out in his opinions. According to him, a woman should only work under certain circumstances, such as when her family was very poor, and only in settings where a husband could control his wife. This young man was a teacher in a local *madrassa*, where his wife also gave classes to female students. He explained that his opinions were based on his Islamic instruction. According to his understanding, men and women should never share the same workplace. Women should only work alongside other women, and when justified, such as due to poverty. During the course of the discussion, he repeatedly emphasised the risks of sexual infidelity when women and men worked together. Another participant also noted that fathers could not trust their daughters nowadays (*'Now daughters do not listen to their parents; they have boyfriends – this is not good for family'*).

Another middle-aged man with visual impairment disagreed with the *madrassa* teacher. He explained that he was very fond of his daughter and wanted her to be well educated and have a good job. This man also noted class differences with regard to women's employment (*'In higher levels of society, women can have any kind of job; in the middle section of society, women only do some type of jobs; at the bottom of society, women often do not work'*). He further commented that women often work more than men, as illustrated by his personal situation (*'My wife takes care of our business and also of the household and our children. She has a huge workload'*).

Education and qualifications were another critical factor that most men perceived as crucial in accessing paid jobs. (*'Educated women can find jobs in many places. In an NGO, in industries...; 'Education is key. If they are educated, women can do any type of work'; 'Different qualifications are needed for different jobs'*). However, one participant commented that in the 'culture of his country', wealthy women, regardless of education, did not need to work as they had a wealthy husband. Some men further claimed that women could not do certain jobs such as driving a truck, but one of the participants disputed that claim noting that there were women truck drivers in other countries. He also noted that in their area of Dhaka (Savar), there were no female drivers, but in the most affluent neighbourhoods of Dhaka, female drivers were becoming more common.

The men with more liberal views further added that women themselves should choose jobs based on their interests, regardless of the level of their education (*'If a woman has*

qualifications, she can do the same job as men’; ‘*Even if women do not have education and can only do a manual job, there should not be limitations in what a woman can or cannot do*’). In contrast, the *madrassa* teacher insisted that women and men were physically and mentally different. For example, in his view, women would not be able to handle a job as a firefighter emotionally and due to physical demands. Another participant noted that the legislation for women’s employment in other countries is more favourable towards women than that in Bangladesh. He added that the situation in Bangladesh was gradually changing and employment opportunities for women were increasing.

Divergence in opinion was also notable when discussing women’s control over earned income and having property in their names. While the oldest illiterate participant declared (with laughter) that as women earned the money, they should also decide how to spend it, other participants insisted that women should always consult with their husbands or give the money to their guardian’ In their view, only women without [male] guardians should make decisions alone about spending their earnings. According to one participant, women who wanted to spend money for themselves were selfish.

One of the participants noted that many women working in garments did not have ‘good husbands’ who often spent their wife’s wages for their own needs. The middle-aged disabled man added that there were husbands that gave property to their wives or decided to invest jointly. He also noted that he did not believe women were not capable of looking after property. His view was supported by another participant who highlighted that ‘*having peace in the house is the main thing*’ and that was why a husband and a wife should cooperate and decide jointly about how to spend their earnings. The young religious teacher commented that Islamic rules were clear about property division between women and men, but according to another participant, families discriminated against their daughters in inheritance because they did not want daughters to give family property to their in-laws.

Various men further discussed a number of challenges that employment of women can lead to. Several men noted that employed women cannot look after children. In the view of the young teacher, the children of an employed woman suffered from behaviour problems as she did not provide them with sufficient attention. He further noted, that, in Bangladesh, there was a huge problem with unemployment of young men and educated women were taking jobs away from these men. He insisted that women should not compete with men in the job market. He was against government programmes supporting women’s employment as this was ‘*bad for*

educated men'. Moreover, he claimed that when a woman reached a top level in her career, she no longer obeyed her husband.

According to another man, *'everybody needed a job'*, not just men. The three men, however, supported the views of the *madrassa* teacher. According to one, the women who earned money can use it for 'bad things' such as drugs. In another view, employed women did not take care of their husbands. Another man opined that women were not trustworthy as they hid things from their husbands (*'My wife says she is in her friend's house but she is at a tea stall'* [a place where men usually socialise]). The elderly man added (with laughter) that there were many examples of working women leaving their husbands to marry another man.

At the end of the discussion, most men highlighted the positive role that NGOs played in supporting women's employment and advocated for skills training and educational programmes for women. The need to improve public safety facilitating women's access to jobs outside of their homes was also mentioned, along with increasing women's salaries and employment in women-underrepresented sectors, such as information technologies. These suggestions were provided by the men with consistently progressive views about women's employment.

5.3.2 Men's focus group: Kurigram

The initial discussion was dominated by positive attitudes towards women's income opportunities (*'If a woman wants to work, we should support her and appreciate it. It's good for a woman to earn money'; 'It's good for children and for family'; 'Women need to work. I cannot provide for my family and my children alone'*). One of the participants added, that in his family, cooperation between him and his wife in providing for family needs was essential (*'In my family, man and woman needs to cooperate, work together and help each other'*). However, he also noted that, in his community, there were few jobs for women. He further highlighted that women had a large workload in household and childcare. The participants further discussed support provided to women by a relatively high number of NGOs operating in the area; thanks to these NGOs, many women were now engaged in tailoring businesses. The men also noted that loans from NGOs enabled women to buy land and grow cash crops.

Not all men, however, agreed that women and men could engage in the same jobs, but the majority of men were aware of women's pay discrimination (*'Men and women do not earn the*

same money for the same job – a woman gets 250 taka and a man gets 300 taka. We do not pay women what we should’; ‘People think they can pay women less. In every sector, women earn less money than men. Only in tailoring, women get more than men because that’s women’s work’; ‘Women work on paddy fields. It is hard work. They are good at it but they do not get the same pay. Women have a weak position in society’). One respondent opined that women in their rural area were less valued than in the town, where he was currently working.

The men were seemingly less united in their opinions on who should control women’s earnings. According to six men, a woman should give her earnings to her husband, while two preferred a joint decision by husband and wife about spending. One of the men supportive of husband’s control also admitted that a ‘clever’ woman knew how to spend money wisely. A similar divergence emerged when discussing women’s property ownership. The disabled respondent with Islamic education believed that property ownership corrupted women (*‘If a woman owns property, sometimes she does not respect her husband. He then feels inferior’*). Another man mentioned fear of divorce as a result of women’s increased freedom thanks to property. The man with consistently liberal views had a very different opinion, also speaking from his personal experience (*‘Not every woman is like this. If wife and husband are close to each other and have a good relationship, she can own property. There is no problem with lack of respect for her husband. Husband and wife should understand each other to have a good family’*).

The disabled respondent with an Islamic background noted that according to Islamic teaching, a woman should not engage in a job outside of her home. He pointed out that there could be an exception in the case of poverty, but even then, it was considered shameful for a woman to work outside her village. This opinion was shared by another six men in the group. These men explained that women can work but the work should be confined to their village (*‘When they are here in the village, we can see them and we can protect them’*). This contradicted earlier discussion where the men noted that there were no industries in the area, but if there were, women could find well paid factory jobs. According to the men, such jobs would be preferred to loans given to women by NGOs to start a micro-business.

When questioned as to the reason behind women’s protection by men, the group argued that lack of safety and a high risk of violence, including the risk of rape, kidnapping and acid throwing, required them to control women’s mobility. A risk of kidnapping was also noted in relation to garments factories in Dhaka. Further, while most of the men claimed that increasing women’s safety was the responsibility of the Government and law-enforcement agencies, two

men also noted that violence against women was committed by ordinary men like them (*'Men do it, men like me'; It can be my son; it can be my brother'*).

The disabled man with a religious background claimed that women who wanted to have jobs outside their villages desired illicit relationships with other men. The two men with more liberal views, however, opposed him by noting that there was no reason to distrust a woman with good intentions. When questioned whether men themselves could undertake any steps to reduce violence against women, there was a long pause. One of the respondents later explained that men felt powerless in the face of sexual harassment and other forms of violence against women and girls in public spaces. Another man added that fathers and mothers could play an important role in educating their sons and daughters on how to behave in the public to increase women's safety.

At the end of the discussion, the men suggested that women's increased access to information and learning skills could increase their options to obtain good employment. In the absence of regular jobs, the men also advocated access to loans that can help women establish micro-businesses, such as goat rearing.

5.3.3 Men's focus group: Sathkira

Overall, the men in the Sathkira group demonstrated support for women's engagement in economic activities, linking women's paid employment with lower poverty in the family, family peace and prosperity of family and society (*'When both husband and wife earn, of course, that family will prosper day by day. It's simple. That family will become richer; their children will become educated. Then they will all be happy'*). The men cited various ways that women can earn income, such as through farming or teaching. Working in a government office or for NGOs was seen as an appropriate and preferred way of earning income by women.

One of the older men highlighted that employment, especially when it entails a woman leaving her home and village, posed risks for women's safety (*'Cost of living is increasing. Women are getting educated and want to have a job. But it is not safe for them'*). Another older man linked women's earnings with women's disobedience (*'When women earn, they think they do not need to listen to their husbands anymore'*). These older men also claimed that even if a woman earned income, its use should involve consultation with her husband as women earn for their family. According to these men, a woman should not have property in her name, because she

then could feel that she had ‘power’. For a man, then, it would be difficult to control her. When asked about women’s pay discrimination, several participants said that it was legitimate to pay lower wages to women as they were not as skilful as men (*‘Woman cannot do the same work as man. For that reason, woman gets lower salary than man’*).

The seemingly youngest participant, however, opined that every woman should have freedom in her life, including financial independence. He argued that lack of financial independence resulted in women’s unhappiness. He asserted that, if a woman was self-sufficient financially, it was good for her family and also for society. However, as noted by the disabled participant, the women in Bangladesh were often discriminated (*‘In our country, women are not independent. We do not give them freedom. I think if we give them freedom, it will be good for family, good for our community, and good for our country’*). Another respondent commented that some families wanted wives to engage only in household work and care of children and other family members. Such families did not like their daughters and daughters-in-law earning income. In his view, this created conflict, especially if women were educated (*‘An educated woman does not want to be a housewife or a mother only. She wants to go outside [her home]; she wants to have a job. At that time, trouble starts in family’*). His views were supported by another respondent (*‘If the wife is educated, but she does not earn, what is the value of that education? If that family does not have much money, they will not be happy. So, educated women should have jobs. It is good for society’*). The participants with more liberal views also pointed out that the situation in Bangladesh was changing and that each family is different. Progressive families wanted women to have more rights and freedoms.

During the closing of the discussion, various men proposed to increase access to good quality training to women and the provision of business loans by government agencies. One of the younger respondents advocated for women’s access to ICT skills.

5.4 Personal/psychological, social and economic dimensions of women's economic empowerment in the indigenous discourses

Both female and male groups applied a range of specific notions when discussing women's employment capabilities (Sen, 1999) and potential empowerment effects, which this analysis clustered into three main categories: 1) personal/psychological, 2) social, and 3) economic dimensions. Tables 5.3 and 5.4 summarise the key aspects in the female and male FGs respectively.

Table 5.3: Critical elements of WEE noted by the women's FGs – Instrument 1

Women's FG	Dhaka	Kurigram	Sathkira
Personal/ Psychological	Self-confidence (link with experience and expertise building) Perseverance Safety, protection Freedom of choice Self-help Self-motivation Fulfilling employment	Self-confidence (link with experience and expertise building) Perseverance Safety, protection Freedom of choice Self-help Self-motivation Access to knowledge Right to happiness Dignity Power	Self-confidence (linked with access to knowledge and experience) Safety, protection Happiness Contentment
Social	Respect by family and community Equality of women's and men's abilities Mobility Collaboration between spouses/ husband's support Helping others Balance between productive and reproductive activities	Respect by family, men, community Equality of women's and men's abilities Mobility Husband's support Helping other Access to information and knowledge Peaceful family life Protection against risks such as ill-health and its negative impacts on children Peer support amongst micro-entrepreneurs Acting as a role model	Respect by husband, family, community Equality of women's and men's abilities Mobility Improved relationship with husband/husband's support/co-sharing reproductive activities Access to information Connectivity with the world outside one's family
Economic	Provision for immediate needs (personal and those of other individuals) Financial independence Freedom to dispose of earned income	Provision for immediate needs (personal and those of other individuals) Financial independence Freedom to dispose of earned income Respectable options to raise income Poverty-free life Self-reliance Investment for future Profitable and regular employment	Provision for immediate needs (personal and those of other individuals, especially children) Financial independence Freedom to dispose of earned income Socially beneficial and respectful employment (e.g. in NGOs)

Table 5.4: Critical elements of WEE noted by the men’s FGs – Instrument 1

Men’s FGs	Dhaka	Kurigram	Sathkira
Personal/ Psychological	Choice, especially for educated, wealthy and urban women Independence/self-reliance	Happiness	Choice, especially for educated women Independence Happiness
Social	Mobility Positive relationship between spouses Support by husband Support for family Mistrust of women Less stress for man to provide for family Class differences in access to employment and lifestyles	Expanded mobility in case of good job prospects Cooperation between husband and wife Care, loving relationship between husband and wife Mistrust of women Women’s employment good for family and society Less stress for man to provide for family Fear of divorce	Expanded mobility in case of good job prospects Cooperation between husband and wife Care, loving relationship between husband and wife Mistrust of women Women’s employment good for family and society
Economic	Training and education Recognition of women’s household burden, while employed Financial freedom, limited control over resources	Training and education Recognition of women’s household burden, while employed Preference for stable factory jobs Limited control over physical and financial resources Equal pay	Training and education Recognition of women’s household burden Preference for skilled secured (‘office’) jobs Limited control over physical and financial resources Unequal pay

Several conclusions can be drawn based on this analysis. Firstly, there was a strong correlation between the men with egalitarian gender attitudes and their awareness of the positive impact of economic capabilities on women. In addition, nearly all men in the FGs were willing to accept expanded women’s capabilities when taking into consideration certain aspects; particularly, women’s higher education, her wealth (class) and urban life-styles. With respect to low-income women, education, the prospect of women’s higher income and the opportunity to reduce household poverty appeared to facilitate men’s openness towards women’s economic rights.

All four rural groups (male and female) highlighted the importance of women’s happiness – an element largely overlooked by the academic discourse on WEE, with a notable exception of Ahmed (2008, 2014). The thesis of a caring spousal relationship appears also in the Qur’an (Kabasakal Arat and Hasan, 2017), feminist masculinity by hooks (1998) and gender empathy encouraged by Pease (2014). To a certain extent, the significance of personal happiness for women corresponds with the critique of the ‘altruistic mother’ by Brickell and Chant (2010); the notion often employed by income-based and instrumentalist approaches to women’s

economic involvement (World Bank, 2006; Kabeer, 2013; Roberts and Zulfikar, 2019), emphasising access to income and jobs.

Both female and male FGs also linked women's economic involvement with a positive relationship between wife and husband and other positive effects contributing to a peaceful and caring household. A positive marital relationship appeared to be correlated with a husband's acknowledgement of women's household burden and his willingness to support her in her economic activities conveyed by the men with egalitarian views. However, women's employment was also a reason for men to feel emasculated which can fuel a household conflict. Such fine balance can be further complicated by the challenge of redistributing care and household work in dual-earner households as the FGs demonstrated a weak interest by men to assume a higher share of this burden. While supporting a dual-earner household model³⁷, even the progressive men failed to acknowledge an acute need to increase their own share of household burden.

Male FGs had a tendency to reinforce the gender-stereotypical notion of 'a nurturing woman', i.e. a mother and wife that works for the benefit of family (and society), not to help herself. The men with less progressive views, while perceiving some advantages of women's paid work for poverty reduction, feared women's economic involvement would lead to 'too much freedom' for women and other negative outcomes for men (divorce, abandonment, adultery, lying, selfishness), which points to a high insecurity of patriarchal men confronted with women's advancement in society.

The indigenous discourses further highlighted the significance of personal dignity and good reputation associated with economic involvement, particularly in rural contexts, in line with several studies on WEE conducted in Bangladesh (Karim, 2011; Guerin, Kumar and Agier, 2013; Lipi, 2016). Personal dignity associated with women's paid work was further reinforced by the desire of winning respect both within and outside the household. This implies, that while obtaining an income-earning source is crucial, such employment should be perceived as a *dignified* way of earning a living. Clearly, this is a loaded socially constructed concept, which can vary widely depending on a context. Nonetheless, it supports the relevance of the *decent* job creation agenda (ILO, 2018) for low-income women (and other workers).

³⁷ Referring to a husband and a wife as the main income earners in one's immediate (nuclear) family.

Similar to the case of the personal/psychological dimension, the women's FGs put significant emphasis on the social dimension of women's economic capabilities, corresponding with the critique of income-dominant and instrumentalist approaches to women's economic involvement (Sen, 1999; Mayoux, 2006; Karim, 2011). The acknowledgement of women's self-confidence was manifested in the women's egalitarian view on equality of women's and men's work-related abilities common in all three women's FGs. Although a deeper discussion undermined this confidence to some extent by reminding the women about various daily obstacles they faced to access the same jobs as men, this confidence can be understood as a significant aspirational goal by women to achieve equal rights in the labour market.

On the contrary, all three men's groups revealed a range of stereotypes and prejudices about women's abilities, promoted by the men with conservative views on gender relations, and opposed by the men with progressive gender attitudes. These stereotypes were justified by patriarchal domination of men over subjugated women (Kandiyoti, 1988; Chowdhury, 2009; Chen and Mac an Ghaill, 2017) underpinned by patriarchal interpretation of Islamic norms of the husband as a provider and his wife's reproductive responsibilities (Musawah, 2018) and essentialist understanding of biological differences between women and men (Rubin, 1975; MacCormack and Strathern, 1980; Irigaray, 1985) within compulsory heteronormativity (Whatling, 1997) which pre-determine (stereotypical) gender-division of labour.

All FGs, male and female, further confirmed awareness of women's mobility as an essential element in women's access to paid employment. While the women's groups demonstrated a strong desire for increased mobility, the men's groups, overall, were less willing to relax cultural/religious practices related to women's mobility, in particular by the conservative respondents in the two rural male groups. The discourse on women's mobility was closely linked with the risk of sexual violence in public spaces. Hence, the control over women's mobility by men was justified by men's 'duty to protect' women from such violence (by other men). Although the female respondents were aware of potential risks of violence outside their homes, this was, in general, not seen as the reason to curtail their mobility. Instead, the discussions seemed to suggest men's control was, to a large extent, motivated by men's mistrust of other men, and, at the same time, by suspicions about women's behaviour, underpinned by men's fears of women's infidelity and abandonment.

Women's desire to access information and learn, including about the world outside their immediate families, appeared prominently in the FGs, especially in two rather isolated rural

groups. This desire challenges the rationale to facilitate ‘culturally appropriate’ home-based employment, promoted as a solution to women in socially conservative areas. While it is possible to offer various ways of learning in proximity to women’s homes, this result suggests that exposure to the world outside women’s immediate surroundings contributes positively to some measures of empowerment and women’s autonomy (Kabeer, 2011).

The expansion of women’s social networks, beyond one’s family and neighbours, can also increase ways of accessing relevant information and support, as exemplified by the women in Kurigram involved in micro-enterprises. These women challenged the gender stereotypical notion of ‘vulnerable’ women’s headed households (Chant, 2003, 2008; Kabeer, Mahmud and Tasneem, 2017). Tenacity and perseverance of these women in the face of adversity can inspire other women to seek employment options, as highlighted by the women themselves.

The Dhaka men’s group demonstrated the highest awareness of differences in women’s lifestyles, although the respondents with the least egalitarian attitudes regarding gender norms disapproved of those that involved women’s independence from men. Nonetheless, the male and female urban respondents, and the rural respondents with experience of progressive lifestyles, collectively, appeared the most egalitarian with respect to (heteronormative) gender relations correlated with higher knowledge and employment rates by the women.

Finally, the respondents in all FGs appeared to favour secure contractual jobs instead of micro-entrepreneurship. Obtaining secured employment by women is dependent on many factors. Those mentioned by the respondents included: education, skills, availability of (decent) jobs for women, reduced discrimination in labour market, eradication of sexual violence and harassment in public space, and protection from future risks. While all women’s groups were confident about the equality of women’s and men’s abilities, this perspective was disputed in all men’s groups. While this is potentially a result of men’s acquired prejudices against women’s capabilities based on gender stereotypes and discriminatory social norms, interestingly, it was the rural Kurigram men’s group that noted the injustice of the gender pay gap. It was related to specific tasks that these men knew well, while also being familiar with the quality of women’s work. This suggests men can be more supportive of equal pay when they have direct experience of women’s performance.

5.5 Immediate needs and strategic interests in the indigenous discourse on women's economic empowerment

In line with the theoretical exploration of WEE presented in Chapter 3, only *transformative* WEE has the potential of contributing to genuine and sustainable changes in women's economic inequalities with men. Section 5.4 applies the analysis of the psychological/personal, social and economic dimensions in the indigenous discourses on WEE identified in Section 5.3 to explore to what extent the indigenous discourses reflect transformative WEE (Cornwall, 2016). This discussion is facilitated by distinguishing women's practical needs, perceived as non-transformative, from women's strategic (structural) interests (Molyneux, 1985; Moser, 1989), contributing to transformative goals.

The practical needs covered by women's earnings identified by three women's FGs were largely similar and involved *personal needs, household expenditure and children's education*. The Dhaka and Kurigram FGs also noted *health care*; the Kurigram FGD added *nutritional food* and *reduction of household burden* (by procuring improved fuel). *Clothing* was also mentioned as an important personal expenditure. The three men's groups also referred to *household needs*; the men's Sathkira group also added *children's education* as a significant immediate expenditure.

While putting emphasis on the needs of others (e.g. children's education, relatives' health), the women did not neglect their own needs, further refuting the gender stereotypical perception of women as self-sacrificing mothers (Brickell and Chant, 2010). The purchase of better quality clothing was not understood as a frivolous expenditure by the women but an important signifier of dignity and reputation (Guérin, Kumar and Agier, 2013; Lipi, 2016) associated with reduced poverty.

These practical needs, identified by the FGs, are in line with women's socially accepted feminine roles, which do not challenge unequal power relations between women and men (Molyneux, 1985; Moser, 1989). As posited by Molyneux (2007), practical needs should be understood as discursively constructed within certain historical, political and cultural contexts, not a result of women's 'natural' (biologically determined) roles. For example, some female and male respondents believed that wealthier women did not desire to be employed as they did not face poverty, perceived as the reason to engage in paid work. Such gender-stereotypical views failed to understand multiple benefits women (their families, communities and societies) derive from paid employment. Furthermore, development interventions that lead to satisfaction

of practical needs of low-income women are crucial in reducing poverty, but they fall short of addressing underlying systemic constraints affecting women's capabilities, which in the long-run undermine the sustainable eradication of poverty.

Unlike practical needs, strategic gender interests are those that challenge gender inequalities; they are context-specific and aim at structural changes in power relations between women and men (Molyneux, 1985; Moser, 1989). All FGs, male and female, implied such strategic goals during the discussions. Applying several analytical frameworks discussed in Chapter 3 (Nussbaum, 2000; Golla et al., 2011; Kabeer, 2009, 2011; Hunt and Samman, 2016), these goals concerned the following aspects:

1. Gender and social norms:

- *Acceptance of women's paid employment by husband, family and society*
- *Decrease in men's gender-based stereotypes about women's abilities and roles*
- *Decrease in men's gender-based stereotypes about employed women*
- *Decrease in men's stereotypes about female and male behaviour and sexuality*
- *Acceptance of women's freedom of movement and increased women's mobility related to income-generation by husband, family and community*
- *Trust-building between women and men, including wife-husband, and daughter-father relationships*
- *Parental guidance for sons and daughters to reduce gender-based violence*
- *Societal awareness on and tolerance of diversity of life-styles and life goals*

2. Education and skills:

- *Women's access to knowledge, education and quality training, including business management skills (provided by government and non-governmental agencies), exposure beyond domestic sphere, and ICT skills*
- *Provision of life skills as a significant factor in women's skills development building resilience and perseverance*

3. Decent work:

- *Equality of employment opportunities for women and men*
- *Expansion of women's earning options (emphasis on non-home-based and sufficiently remunerated jobs that do not harm women's health)*
- *Introduction of context-specific criteria of decent and dignified employment options*
- *Mobilisation of household and community members and institutions to support women's economic involvement by pointing to a range of benefits (including economic, social and personal/psychological dimensions)*

4. Legal frameworks:

- *Ensuring violence-free household; protection of women from sexual and gender-based violence in private and public spheres; women's protection by law enforcement agencies*
- *Cooperation with Islamic institutions on agenda supporting women's rights (egalitarian interpretations of Islamic norms and guidance)*
- *Implementation of anti-discrimination legislation in labour market; zero-tolerance of sexual harassment in workplace; equal pay for women and men*
- *Protection against forced and early marriage*
- *Implementation of legislation prohibiting dowry*

5. Property, assets ownership:

- *Access to financial capital*
- *Equal property rights for women and men*

6. Care, household work:

- *Time to rest and recuperate applied to household work*

- *Reduction of women's household burden (childcare and other tasks) through feasible strategies*
- *Involvement of men in childcare and household work; in promotion of dual-earner household models potentially linked with reduction of gender stereotypical division of labour in private and public spheres*

7. Social protection:

- *Right to dignified, poverty-free, peaceful and happy life*
- *Social protection schemes in unemployment and ill-health*
- *Social protection of single mothers*

Based on the six FGs, both female and male respondents were, implicitly or explicitly, aware of a wide range of strategically important issues associated with women's economic involvement. There appeared to be at least four goals that emerged prominently in both women's and men's groups. These concerned the following: 1) work towards increased women's mobility; 2) improve women's access to education and skills (potentially complemented with life skills); 3) ensure women's protection from violence in private and public spheres; and 4) increase access to decent work opportunities, in particular in rural areas, and outside of women's homes. The implementation of appropriate legislation protecting women also received substantial attention, especially by the women's groups. While the women prioritised social protection and reduction of their household burden (care and other household work), all men's FGs largely overlooked these aspects, including their specific role in sharing care and household tasks when a wife also earns income.

Both women and men paid limited attention to strategic importance of access to and control over productive resources by women. The men's groups demonstrated high resistance to women's ownership rights, likely associated with men's fear of women's independence, losing control over women and abandonment. With respect to the women's FGs, the marginal insistence of the women on ownership may indicate women's internalisation of men's control and decision-making over such assets.

The indigenous discourse mostly dealt with aspects related to personal agency within the ambit of familial and communal life and concerns at the level of personal patriarchy (Pease, 2014).

Some limited awareness of structural patriarchy (Pease, 2014) and the need for deeper structural changes were present with respect to unequal gender division of labour; discriminatory gender and social norms in family, community and labour market relations; and horizontal and vertical segregation of female workers in labour market (Palmer, 1995; Elson, 1998; Asadullah and Wahhaj, 2016; Dasgupta and Verick, 2016).

While both female and male groups recognised the positive work of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and some female respondents were direct beneficiaries of aid assistance, this support by NGOs appeared to be used instrumentally in getting women into certain income-generating activities, but not to stimulate the social organisation of women to address the roots of gender-based inequality, including with respect to paid employment.

It appeared that women's perspectives were in line with egalitarian interpretations of the Islamic norms (Kabasacal Arat and Hasan, 2017; Musawah, 2018, Nazneen, 2018). However, the women's discourse on Islamic norms was limited, unlike the religious and conservative men present in all three men's FGs that adhered to protectionist interpretations of the Islamic guidance (women were subjugated to patriarchal men).

Finally, the women's aspirations to increase their (economic) freedoms expressed in the FGs can be understood as a continuation of historic activism of Bangladeshi women for democratic and inclusive national development (Van Schendel, 2009; Panday and Li, 2014; Nazneen, 2017), which, in general, is in line with the current Government development policies, including, but not limited to, the national programme of Vision 21 which gives prominence to women's employment and poverty reduction (CPD, 2007).

5.6 Key findings from the analysis of the indigenous discourse on women's economic empowerment

In all three men's FGs, the discussions were framed by the norm of male primary breadwinner, heightened especially in the discourse of the most conservative men. Such men appealed to their 'natural' men's right to employment, which women were now trying to take away from them. These men's resistance to WEE can be perceived as a survival mechanism to both preserve their patriarchal masculinity and ensure their material security. Further, there was no indication that the men that favoured a dual-earner household model would be willing to accept their wife as a primary breadwinner, perhaps with the exception of severely disabled men. An example of two disabled men from the groups, however, indicated that this could deepen men's conservative viewpoints in the face of their perceived emasculation.

Predictably, the indigenous discourse on women's economic empowerment (WEE) was conducted within the framework of compulsory heteronormativity of opposite feminine and masculine genders. However, both women's and men's discussions, at least to some extent, challenged the strict relations of dominant masculinity and submissive femininity.

All three women's FGs expressed desire for masculinities resisting patriarchal gender order. This included aspiration to live in a dual-earner household, where women are 'allowed' to find and maintain paid employment, and men participate in reproductive work. The FGs further highlighted the preference for a husband that favoured joint decision-making and co-operation with his wife within empathetic and caring masculinities (hooks, 1998; Pease, 2014) and marital togetherness (Ahmed, 2008, 2014). A supportive husband was a key enabler for women's entry into the labour market, although there was also an indication that a husband's power in this aspect may be curtailed due to patriarchal gender norms of relatives and wider community members.

The men with egalitarian attitudes in all three men's FGs also favoured a dual-earner household with benefits for themselves, and, importantly, for women. Equally, these men supported joint decision-making, collaboration between spouses, and involved fatherhood, including care of daughters reflected in a number of theories supporting positive masculinities (Kimmel, 1996; hooks, 1984; 1998; Flood, 2005, 2007; Pease, 2014). They also had an awareness of women's burden in the household and could perceive benefits of living in a loving marriage. These men appeared to be aware of their patriarchal privilege (Connell, 2005; Pease, 2006, 2014), at least to some extent, and were in favour of increasing women's rights in line with the recent social

transformation in Bangladesh. The egalitarian men could be perceived as the embodiments of masculinities supporting WEE.

With respect to the labour market and the workplace, all women's groups suggested that they would like to compete for jobs in the labour market under equal conditions for women and men and underpinned by trust in women's abilities by men. While all three men's FGs were largely in favour of women earning income and supported women's participation in education and skills-training, the more egalitarian men acknowledged discrimination of women in the labour market and society at large, and even associated women's economic exclusion with women's unhappiness.

All women's and men's FGs provided evidence for deeply rooted patriarchal norms. Despite some positive experience of the female respondents with respect to paid employment, all three women's FGs referred to various examples of a patriarchal gender order and re-traditionalisation (Kandiyoti, 1988; Chowdhury, 2009; Chen and Mac an Ghail, 2017) at household, workplace, community, and institutional levels. At household level, these could be seen in men's resisting women's mobility and 'allowing' women's employment only in cases of poverty without challenging men's primary breadwinning role. These positions were often reinforced by conservative family and community members (both women and men).

Men perceived disabled husbands of itinerant saleswomen as being incapacitated to fulfil their patriarchal husband duties, including a wife's protection. The widowed women were deprived altogether of such patriarchal shields inherent in patriarchal gender relations in these women's contexts, encouraging sexual harassment by men. It is worth noting that sexual harassment of women can be understood as a transgression of the Qur'anic recommendation of chastity directed at both women and men (Kabasakal Arat and Hasan, 2017).

Both women's and men's FGs perceived an institutional failure to ensure women's protection in public spaces (including workplace). In such absence, the men with less progressive views, in particular in rural areas, justified policing women as an effective strategy. This 'solution' involved employment of patriarchal religious/cultural norms that required women's seclusion (Bartky, 1988; Asadullah and Wahhaj, 2016).

The Sathkira women's group, with the fewest women with paid work, collectively, demonstrated the deepest 'traditional' femininities dependent on dominating masculinities; however, all three women's groups, to varying degrees, conformed to patriarchal notions of femininities, in particular with regard to their primary reproductive responsibility, regardless

of their employment status. The Sathkira female respondents were aware of their subjugated position and men's patriarchal privileges. This was reflected, among other aspects, in women's frustration regarding detrimental cultural practices of dowry, child marriage and seeking divorce without consultation with a wife.

All men's FGs included men with deep patriarchal stereotypes about women justified by religious beliefs, biological differences between women and men, and women's inferior abilities in comparison to men, which, according to these men, legitimated women's lower wages. These stereotypes often co-existed and reinforced each other in the discourse of the less progressive men. The most conservative men, with heightened patriarchal views, favoured a protectionist interpretation of Islamic norms and guidance (Ahmed, 2006; Kabasacal Arat and Hasan, 2017; Maître, 2017; Musawah, 2018), where a dominant man controls his wife (and other women), including her sexuality that is under constant threat by other men.

Controlling attitudes and behaviour by the men with respect to women's mobility and use of women's earnings were closely linked with the men's fear of disrespect, disobedience, abandonment and divorce. The conservative men were also fearful of an independent woman with power that, in the imagination of these men, was inherent in her earned income and property ownership. It is worth recalling that the most conservative views and prejudices against working women were presented by the two men who emphasised their religious upbringing – the madrassa teacher from Dhaka/Savar and the religious disabled man from Kurigram.

Some erosion of patriarchal gender norms was observed. The Dhaka and Sathkira women's FGs pointed to conditional support of women's economic involvement by men, specifically, if it improved the family's wellbeing, reduced men's stress of the main provider and a woman was not involved in any suspicious behaviour and relations. The Kurigram women's group also referred to resistance to sexual harassment by men by employing cultural values of respect and dignity, while the widowed women and the women married to disabled men in the group de facto assumed a traditional male role of a breadwinner in their families. Some husbands supportive of women's employment resorted to control of women's earnings (Dhaka and the Sathkira FGs), although this behaviour did not apply to all supportive husbands.

All three men's groups demonstrated willingness to relax strict patriarchal gender norms under certain conditions. Within the Dhaka FG, this would be possible within urban lifestyles and when involving higher educated women and those pertaining to a higher class. In both rural

men's FGs, the relaxation of gender binary roles could be facilitated by women's prospects of a better job (stable, respectable, with acceptable income) underpinned by increased education and skills by women. Such patriarchal bargains (Kandiyoti, 1988) allow for an increase in some women's rights, while still preserving certain patriarchal norms.

Finally, it appeared that women's perspectives were in line with egalitarian interpretations of the Islamic norms. All three women's FGs expressed desire for masculinities resisting patriarchal gender order. Islamic recommendations regarding preferred masculinities, corresponding, to a large extent, to positive masculinities with respect to women's economic inclusion, could be strategically used in public mobilisation to increase support for WEE as well as other strategic goals, such as elimination of sexual and gender-based violence.

Chapter 6 Ideal Manhood Supportive of Women's Economic Empowerment as Viewed by Low-income Women

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 6 further contributes to setting the starting point of the empirical research on masculinities' positioning towards transformative women's economic empowerment (WEE) in the context of Bangladesh. This chapter is concerned with the examination of indigenous discourses of idealised masculinities that can facilitate increased economic capabilities (freedoms). It builds on the concepts of peaceful household and marital togetherness explored by Ahmed (2008, 2014) with the aim to identify contextualised idealised masculinities that women value and which have a potential to facilitate women's economic empowerment (WEE) in low-income contexts. The results provide insights on what constitutes idealised progressive masculinities and how these distinguish from other masculinity markers in low-income women's discourse.

The mapping of women's views was conducted during the focus groups (FGs) that followed Instrument 1 exploring indigenous perceptions of WEE. The second round of FGs took place in the same locations – Savar *Upazila* (Dhaka), Kurigram Sadar *Upazila*, and Sathkira Sadar *Upazila*. The facilitated discussion focused on five main themes: 1) husband's desired personality traits; 2) ideal relationships between husband and wife and with others; 3) husband's positioning vis-a-vis women's freedoms; 4) husband's involvement in household and care work; and 5) husband's faith.

The original plan to develop a visual representation of an ideal man/husband with the use of visual materials was abandoned during two sessions. In all three groups, the women struggled to carry out this task according to the instructions. The Dhaka group managed to develop an image but it was largely narrative and a product of one participant, rather than an image developed as a group. Therefore, in the Kurigram and Sathkira groups the author pre-selected some images and the facilitator was instructed to stimulate a discussion around these. An example of the cut-outs used in the FGs is presented in Figure 6.1.

The Dhaka FG involved the same eight participants, whereas a new group of nine women was invited for the session in Kurigram (carried out in a different rural settlement). In Sathkira, the group included seven previous participants and two new ones. The selection was carried out by local volunteers based on the criteria prepared by the author (female respondents, over 18 years of age, living in moderate poverty or recently graduated from extreme poverty). The

discussions were facilitated by the female facilitators from the previous FGs. The sessions were audio-recorded and consecutively interpreted to the researcher by the male interpreters from the previous FGs, who also prepared the English transcript of the proceedings, cleaned by the author.

Figure 6.1: Cut-outs used in FGs to discuss alternative masculinities – Instrument 2



Source: Popular magazines

6.2 Imagining ideal manhood facilitating women's economic empowerment

Table 6.1 provides a structured summary of the participants' statements on the ideal man/husband, complimented by the participants' quotes reflecting on their own husbands. The key findings from three discussions are provided in Section 6.2.3.

Table 6.1: Summary of women's statements on ideal manhood – Instrument 2

Ideal Man/Husband			
Locations	Savar (Dhaka)	Kurigram	Sathkira
Characteristics	- Has a good character - Has a smiling face - Is very caring - Is impartial in family matters; not only on the side of his relatives - Is a peaceful person - Perceived as good by other people – is ideal in the eyes of others	- Has good intentions; this leads to a happy family - Has a good character - Has a good mind - Is understanding - Is active - Has power - Is peaceful and calm when at home - Behaves well – strives to earn money; is less angry and wants happiness in the family - Not like this man [picture of a handsome man]; these types of men take drugs and do bad things; but if they have a good job, it's fine - Not like this [picture of a fashion model]; this man spends too much time on making himself handsome; he loses a lot of time on his looks which is costly - Appearance is not important	- Has a good mind - Is a good person - Is educated to be able to study with children - Is handsome and have light skin - Can be handsome but a handsome man can be also a bad person; does not need to be good looking; can even be from a lower class, but should be a good person - Looks do not matter - Has a job; preferably a government job - Is loving
Relationships with wife and others	- Has a good relationship with his wife - Prevents fights with his wife and others - Takes decisions in the household jointly - Buys presents for his wife - Spend time with his family and relatives such as in entertainment locations - Takes care of all relatives, not only those from his family; husbands sometimes do not like their in-laws	- His income is important but so is having good attitudes towards children, family and his wife - Takes care of his wife and children - Understands his wife - Is not angry with his wife; has good attitude - Is not violent towards his wife - Listens to wife's opinions and discusses issues with her - Serves other people [like a doctor in a picture]	- Does not fight with his wife - Cooperates with his wife - Takes care and respects others
Women's freedoms	- Gives wife and other women freedom to go where they want to go	- Understands how difficult it is for a woman to get a job and to work outside [non-home-based job]	- Does not call his wife all the time to find out where she is - Gives his wife freedom

	- Does not control his wife and other women; does not call all the time where his wife is - Is supportive of his wife - Encourages his wife to try to get a good job - Gives his wife freedom to spend money that she earns	- Trusts his wife; when there is trust in marriage, there is no problem when a woman meets with men outside of her family	- Is not suspicious of his wife - Does not stop wife going to places - Is supportive of wife's employment
Household work and childcare	- Takes care of children and contributes to household chores – cooking, cleaning, washing clothes - Takes responsibility of family and household so his wife has time to have a paid job	- Helps his wife with her work - Takes care of children - Helps his wife; when she works very hard, she also needs to rest and that's why she needs his help	- Takes care of children - Does household work
Faith	N/A	N/A	- Is a good Muslim

Statements comparing ideal masculinities with women's reality: Savar (Dhaka)

'All husbands are different.'

'My husband does not have patience; he sometimes doubts me.'

'Sometimes he is not happy that I spend too much time at work; he wants me to be at home.'

'My husband spends a lot of money but I want him to save money for future.'

'My husband is a chain smoker. He used to treat me badly [was violent]. Now he is calmer.'

'My husband does not give me enough money; he spends what he earns. He often does not talk to me and is not caring.'

'Now he is helpful with the children, but he wasn't before. My adult children support me and tell him how to behave with me.'

'I have to do a lot of work in the house but he asks other family members³⁸ and the children to help me'.

'He tries helping me in the house but he does not do it well so I have to do it again.'

'When my husband sees I am not able to finish some work in the house, he supports me, but my mother-in-law is not happy. She is very controlling.'

'Men's opinions and behaviour are changing.'

³⁸ The household contains several family units.

Statements comparing ideal masculinities with women's reality: Kurigram

'If my husband earned money, there would be no need for me to get a job outside of our house. I could stay at home.'

'My husband thinks it is shameful for me to work outside the house.'

'My husband is disabled, he cannot earn money, so I have to get a job.'

'My husband does not want me to work outside [of the household]. But I think it is good for our family when I have a job.'

'We discussed this with my husband. When we put together his earnings and mine, it is good for our family.'

Statements comparing ideal masculinities with women's reality: Sathkira

'If a husband does not have a job, it is a huge problem; we as women we do not work and cannot cover expenses. Our children would not go to school.'

'It is difficult for a woman that is alone.'

'My husband is mixed: sometimes he gets angry with me.'

'My husband never supports me. He looks for other women. He does not help me with the children. He does not respect me. He does not have a good mind. He is not responsible.'

'My husband also calls me often where I am and wants to know with whom I am.'

'Phone creates problems. My husband might behave at home but he can use his phone to have relations with other women.'

'Yes, my husband is ideal. He is an artist and when he is busy I can help him.'

6.3 Key findings from the analysis of the indigenous discourse on ideal manhood

This section offers a summary of key findings from the three focus groups on envisioning an ideal man/husband by low-income women. The analysis is based on the statements made by the participants and the reflections on the women's reality within the framework of the WEE, women's labour and masculinities theories presented in Chapter 3. The summary is a result of *collective* interpretation, although some references to individuals' statements are also used to illustrate certain points.

At the outset of the discussion, it is important to note that although it was originally envisaged that developing a visual representation of an ideal (Muslim) man/husband using colourful cut-outs with images of diverse men could be an engaging way to discuss ideal masculinities, in reality, the low-income women that participated in the exercise, particularly the illiterate women confined to their immediate villages, struggled to use their imagination to express themselves.

This, however, was not just a methodological problem. The challenges during the task completion implied that living secluded lives can limit women's (and men's) cognitive skills impacting knowledge and understanding of the world around. There was a clear difference between the Dhaka urban, mobile, literate and mostly employed women and their counterparts in the two rural areas, particularly the Sathkira group, in which the majority of the women were illiterate, unemployed and homebound. Drawing on Spivak (1988), the exercise suggests restricted exposure to information can limit one's capacity to discuss problems, imagine solutions and communicate effectively about these. Thus, it matters not only what is but also what *is not* expressed and *by whom*.

Despite these obstacles, the discussion in all three groups still offered a number of significant perspectives relevant for the study of ideal masculinities from the vantage point of low-income women, presented below.

As anticipated, the discussion in all three focus groups was framed by the gender binary of femininity and masculinity (Irigaray, 1985) and Witing's compulsory heteronormativity (Whatling, 1997). However, it also revealed that the participants aspired to relax some gender norms perceived to constrain their lives. Notably, all three groups were aware of reproductive tax (Palmer, 1995) and unequal gender division of labour in care and household work and expressed the desire for men to become more involved in the household. Such an involved husband and father (Johansson, 2011; Hanlon, 2012; Browne, 2013) would dedicate substantial

time to his wife, children and relatives (Dhaka). In the Sathkira group, the women also made a link between an involved father with higher education and improvement of children's school results. The discussions further highlighted women's desire for a man that would avoid conflict (all three groups), understand his wife (Kurigram), support his wife (Dhaka, Kurigram), listen to her opinions (Kurigram), discuss issues with her (Kurigram), cooperate with her (Sathkira), and take decisions in the household jointly (Dhaka). These aspirations reflected the women's strong desire to abandon 'traditional' patriarchal masculinities based on men's domination of women, highlighted already in the women's FGs on WEE. These aspirations were in line with the goal of marital togetherness proposed by Ahmed (2008, 2014) based on emotional involvement by men (hooks, 1998; Pease, 2014), which also featured prominently in the previous women's and men's FGs on WEE (Research Instrument 1).

The discussions suggested that the women primarily concentrated on aspects pertaining to the operation of personal patriarchal systems (Pease, 2014), but were, most likely, unaware of the operation of structural and institutionalised patriarchy (Pease, 2014), political dimensions of their unequal status (Rowlands, 1995; Kabeer, 2012; Cornwall, 2016), and the linkages between 'the personal and the political'³⁹.

Some issues discussed by the women intuitively involved a number of strategic interests with respect to desired masculinities. Specifically, in addition to the shared burden of care and household work (all groups), the women desired a husband that would support their mobility (to go where they wanted), based on a husband trusting his wife (all three groups), while avoiding checking on his wife where she was and with whom (Kurigram, Sathkira). Further, the participants referred to an ideal man that supported his wife in obtaining a job (Dhaka, Sathkira), understood labour market discrimination against women (Kurigram), and gave his wife freedom in decision-making related to earned income (Dhaka). The Kurigram group also desired to expand their social circles beyond women-only environments resisting men's fear of women's sexual infidelity. Overall, the Dhaka group appeared more capable of identifying strategic interests in idealised masculinities than the two rural groups.

Furthermore, all three groups demonstrated a strong aspiration to live in a non-violent household with a nonaggressive partner underpinned by the following characteristics: good natured, calm, able to resolve conflict peacefully, understanding, kind, caring, serving others,

³⁹ There is no consensus on the authorship of the phrase.

loving. While these can be perceived in the Western scholarship as gender stereotypical characteristics associated with ‘traditional’ femininity, not masculinity, they can be also traced in the ideal masculinities recommended by the Qur’an (Kabasakal Arat and Hasan, 2017) with reference to Islamic values of kindness, care, honesty, justice, steadfastness and peacefulness. The discussion by the women in Sathkira suggested a desire for men to comply with the Islamic virtue of chastity, which, in the analysis by Kabasakal Arat and Hasan (2017), is a virtue recommended for both men and women, not only for women. The analysis by Kabasakal Arat and Hasan (2017) also highlights that violence – in private and public spheres – is discouraged and should be used by Muslim men only as a last resort. The discussions suggested that the women in all three groups supported an egalitarian interpretation of the Islamic values.

With respect to faith, it is worth noting that, in comparison to the discussions with the men involved in this research (Instruments 1, 3, 4 and 5) where faith and Islamic practice emerged frequently, the majority of the female participants in this exercise did not directly discuss an ideal man’s faith as a fundamental value. Only one participant in the Sathkira group referred to an ideal man as ‘a good Muslim’. As noted above, this can imply that women focused on practical aspects affecting them directly, such as conflict in the household and material security. However, it can also suggest that the women were less equipped to strategically employ Islamic principles to safeguard at least some of their rights inherent in Muslim/Islamic feminist discourse (Musawah, 2018; Nazneen, 2018). Needless to say, such strategic deployment of a religious value-system would depend on a specific interpretation of Islamic principles acceptable in women’s households and community.

Despite the women’s leaning towards social progressiveness, some gender stereotypical traits (Mac Cormack and Strathern, 1980) attributed to ‘traditional’ patriarchal masculinities (Kandiyoti, 1988; Chowdhury, 2009; Hasan, Aggleton and Persson, 2018) were present in all three groups. These were particularly related to men’s breadwinning responsibilities and to providing materially for a wife and children, preferably through a stable and socially-valued job such as government employment (Sathkira). The participants in Kurigram also referred to an ideal man/husband as ‘active’ and ‘having power’ and one participant in Dhaka expected an ideal man/husband to give her presents, all traits frequently associated with ‘traditional’ masculinities and patriarchal cultural practices. Such expectations likely persisted in the participants’ social imagery due to a continuous process of socialisation in certain binary gender norms reinforced within a specific patriarchal gender order and its institutions (De

Beauvoir, 1949; Matthews, 1984; Butler, 2007; Chowdhury, 2009; Islam and Assadulah, 2018).

Moreover, the women's desire for these 'traditional' functions performed by men can be an example of patriarchal gender bargain (Kandyoti, 1988) with varied rationales. Some women perceived an ideal man/husband's adequate income as a way to escape the drudgery of low-paid work and poverty and would prefer a male-breadwinner family model based on gender stereotypical division of labour. Others tried to bargain with their husbands to maintain a dual-earner household (referring to a husband and a wife as main income earners), using the argument of increased wellbeing of their family. For other women, a dual-earner model was beneficial for the family *and* also provided them with a chance for personal fulfilment. As noted earlier, in such dual-earner models, an ideal husband would assume a larger share of care and household work. It is also worth pointing out that the women from the Sathkira group, who lived in primary male-breadwinner households, noted discomfort with their high dependency on their husbands, which they saw as being detrimental to their personal freedoms. These women appeared to be the unhappiest in their marriages.

Furthermore, the contextual characteristics of all three sites of inquiry could potentially contribute to erosion of 'traditional' patriarchal masculinities. Such situated South Asian masculinities (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Butler, 2007; Silberschmidt, 2011; Chakrabarty, 2014) could be particularly impacted by lacking employment opportunities, especially in Kurigram and Sathkira, due to exclusion from the recent economic growth and industrialisation that is concentrated primarily in large urban zones. Economic (and social exclusion) is compounded with recurrent environmental challenges (applicable to all three locations) that are detrimental to men's (and women's) health. Older, poorer men with ill-health and lower education thus may face increased challenges in fulfilling their roles of primary providers. At the extreme end, the erosion of patriarchal masculinities can be detected with respect to disabled men, whose disability hindered them to fulfil their breadwinner responsibility. As noted earlier, in the case of disabled married men, they may feel emasculated when effectively replaced by their wives in providing for the family with uncertain consequences for peace in the household.

To a certain degree, widows and abandoned women, who fulfil primary breadwinning roles in their households due to an 'absentee' husband can also be seen as agents eroding 'traditional' masculinities in patriarchal gender order. This was particularly evident in both women's focus

groups in Kurigram with a high representation of women with disabled husbands. As posited by Chant (2003, 2008) and confirmed by some experiences of the respondents, these women's personal situations, despite apparent challenges, can also be positive and empowering for women, in contrast to frequent stereotypical association of so-called 'women-headed households' with 'vulnerability'. Still, as noted in the analysis of the results from Research Instrument 1, close family, community members, workplace colleagues and institutional failures can directly and indirectly contribute to re-traditionalisation (Chen and Mac an Ghail, 2017) of these women into their gender-stereotypical roles, whether by forcing women to abandon their economic activities, behave more 'modestly' in public, stick to their (primary) reproductive responsibilities, or accept another man to provide for them and act as their 'guardian'.

Alternative masculinities (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005), exemplified in the discussions by images of young, urban and stylish men, were mostly rejected by the women as such men were principally perceived to be irresponsible and frivolous, and even drug-addicts indulging in improper sexual behaviour. When discussing men's presumed excessive time and resources spent on their grooming, the women were often giggling, potentially perceiving such behaviour as effeminate. While concluding that 'appearance is not important', the women in Kurigram appeared to be more accepting of such men if they had a 'good job'. This suggested that alternative masculinities can be acceptable if the patriarchal masculinity trait of having employment and income is not compromised.

Furthermore, while the generational conflict regarding preferred masculinities, including in life-styles, is common in Bangladesh (Hasan, Aggleton and Persson, 2018), the views presented by the respondents can also indicate the already mentioned problem of women's limited exposure to the external world, in particular with respect to the women living in remote rural areas with limited education and access to information. The more educated urban women from Dhaka were the least critical of the images of young and urban men, in comparison to their rural counterparts in Kurigram and Sathkira, pointing to a higher exposure of the urban women to a diversity of life-styles and more accurate knowledge about them, which can potentially decrease prejudices.

In addition, while one of the women in the Sathkira group perceived handsomeness and even 'light skin' as positive male qualities, this was disputed by another Sathkira participant, who noted that a handsome man can also be a bad person. In her view, what mattered more than

good looks and even social class (a proxy indicator of wealth) was a man's good character. Her view may suggest that, while material and financial security provided by a man is important to low-income women, at least some women realise that this should not constrain their personal safety and happiness, including the goal of marital togetherness (Ahmed, 2008, 2014). The reference to positively perceived 'light skin' was, however, a reminder of intersecting gender and race relations, linked to the socially constructed power of Whiteness in post-colonial contexts.

Overall, the vision of an ideal man/husband that emerged from all three groups point to the women's desire for a positive hegemonic masculinity that supports women's freedoms and wellbeing (hooks, 1984, 1998; Connell, 1985; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Kimmel, 1996; Flood, 2005; Pease, 2014; Almassi, 2015). Based on the women's descriptions of their actual situation, however, these ideals can be perceived as alternative, counter-hegemonic, masculinities resisting the hegemonic masculinities stemming from patriarchal gender relations (at personal and structural levels) prevalent in the women's contexts.

Linked to the above, all discussions revealed the evidence of men's patriarchal privilege and internalised superiority over women (Connell, 2005; Pease, 2002, 2006, 2014), which were the source of women's discontent with their actual situations. While the participants acknowledged that all men were different, and there were one or two women in each group that noted positive experiences with their husbands, the general conclusion in each group was that the respondents' own husbands were more or less far from the portrayal of an ideal man that they had just discussed. The majority of women in all three groups narrated personal experience of conflict with their husbands, including physical, economic, psychological and emotional violence. The women mentioned restrictions in their mobility (all groups); neglect of a husband's breadwinner responsibilities, physical violence, excessive spending and not engaging in conversation with his wife (Dhaka); restricting his wife's employment (Dhaka, Kurigram); and, presumably, cheating (Sathkira). Further, while a limited number of husbands engaged in some household work, probably, based on altruistic motives, or because they were nudged to do so by adult children (Dhaka), the discussions showed that women (wives and mothers) can also be actors reinforcing 'traditional' masculinities and act as gatekeepers in men's involvement in reproductive work (Schoppe-Sullivan et al, 2015).

On a positive note, the Dhaka and Sathkira discussions highlighted the link between marital cooperation, quality of marriage and economic wellbeing of the family, including greater

support for women's economic involvement by men. A small group of the women's husbands appeared to adhere to more progressive masculinities resisting patriarchy (Ratele, 2015) in at least some aspects of individual patriarchy. These men, potentially, can fulfil the role of positive social actors (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005) encouraging other men to subscribe to more progressive masculinities.

Finally, while the Sathkira women's group appeared the most frustrated as a whole with regard to gender relations; the Dhaka participants were the most optimistic and acknowledged that, despite continuous challenges for women, they were witnessing men's opinions and behaviours changing for better.

Chapter 7 Muslim Men's Attitudes on Women's Economic Empowerment

7.1 Introduction

Chapter 7 discusses Muslim men's attitudes on women's economic empowerment (WEE) obtained through a peer-to-peer survey. Together with Chapter 8 responds to the second research sub-question concerned with an in-depth analysis of masculinities' positioning towards women's economic empowerment in the discourse by Muslim men and understanding of what that drives and what hinders men's progressiveness on WEE. The peer-to-peer survey was carried out by peer surveys identified by the authors in their typical social circles, such as relatives in their places of origin, friends and random acquaintances at various social occasions. This was done with the double aim – to expand the outreach of the survey, while also increasing the probability of candid views by respondents.

The survey was structured around four main themes: 1) women's capabilities and freedoms; 2) women's employment and skills; 3) men's involvement in reproductive work; and 4) men's roles in working towards gender equality. Its purpose was to collect socially valid men's views that could be analysed from the perspective of their progressiveness with respect to WEE. The survey was carried out from April to September 2019 by seven peer-to-peer researchers – six adult Bangladeshi Muslim men and one Hindu man recruited as volunteers. The surveyors worked at an international non-governmental organisation based in Dhaka but were instructed to maintain the balance of respondents in terms of location, age, and socio-economic background. In total, 86 adult Muslim men responded to the survey.

The chapter presents the results according to the main themes explored by the survey, complemented by weighing findings against three variables: 1) age; 2) rural-urban continuum; and 3) socio-economic status (considered through education/employment proxy). The variable of religious affiliation (strong, moderate, weak) was dropped due to a likelihood men might not rate themselves candidly. Equally, it was also decided to drop the disability variable due to the impossibility of verifying the health status of each respondent during the survey. Section 7.4 summarises the key findings of the survey results.

The survey, translated in Bengali, included thirty statements (Annex 6) with four options: strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. Respondents were instructed to select only one response per statement. Each option was assigned a value of 0, 1, 2 or 3, where 3 was the highest score attributed to the most progressive response and 2 to somewhat progressive

choice. On the other side of scale, 0 was attributed to the most conservative or the least progressive response, and 1 to somewhat conservative response. The statements purposely carried either positive or negative meaning; hence in some cases 'strongly agree' could be attributed the value of 3, i.e. the most progressive choice, while in other responses 'strongly agree' could be assigned zero, i.e. the least progressive option. In the presentation of the results below the letter 'v' means 'value'.

7.2 Men's attitudes on women's economic empowerment

7.2.1 Overall survey results

Overall results (Table 7.1) from the survey may paint a rather optimistic outlook of the respondents' attitudes on women's (economic) freedoms. Out of the total number of 2,580 responses in the survey (86 men x 30 statements), 63.92 per cent of the responses were attributed the value of 2 (v2) or 3 (v3), i.e. progressive responses. There were 533 responses with v3 (20.66 per cent) and twice as many, or 1,116 answers with v2 (43.26 per cent). On the opposite side of the spectrum, 262 or 10.16 per of all responses carried the value of 0 (v0), which indicates the least progressive choice, and 669 responses, or 25.93 per cent, were attributed the value of 1 (v1), which indicated the second most conservative response.

Table 7.1: Total responses per option and corresponding percentage – Instrument 3

	v0	v1	v2	v3
No. of Responses	262	669	1,116	533
% of Responses	10.16%	25.93%	43.26%	20.66%

The highest positive score (v3) was attributed to the statement about a daughter's continued education and postponing her marriage (*If my daughter had good results at school, I would like her to continue her studies, even if it meant postponing her marriage*). In total, 48.84 per cent of the men opted for the v3 response, in addition to 39.53 per cent that selected v2. In this case, the v0 and v1 options were each selected by 5.81 per cent of the men. The second highest score corresponded to the statement on equal access in receiving financial management education at school (*Both girls and boys should be educated about financial management at school*). The v3 response was selected by 47.67 per cent of the respondents, while 40.70 per cent of the men selected the v2 option. The statements with the most progressive responses are included in Table 7.2 below.

Table 7.2: Statements with the most progressive responses in the survey – Instrument 3

Statement	% of men that selected v3	% of men that selected v2	Total % (v3+ v2)
<i>If my daughter had good results at school, I would like her to continue her studies, even if it meant postponing her marriage</i>	48.84	39.53	88.34
<i>Both girls and boys should be educated about financial management at school</i>	47.67	40.70	88.37
<i>My wife's and daughter's happiness is more important than what people in my family or community say about me</i>	40.70	51.16	91.86
<i>In our society, women and men do not have equal work opportunities because women face more obstacles than men</i>	30.05	47.67	77.72
<i>Ensuring equal rights for women and men are also men's responsibility</i>	32.56	41.86	74.42
<i>If my wife or daughter applied for skills development training, I would support them to join</i>	31.40	61.63	90.03
<i>I think it is important to teach boys to respect women</i>	39.53	48.84	88.37
<i>Men who do women's work in the house are not real men</i>	33.72	45.61	79.33

The response to the statement: *I think it is important to teach boys to respect women* not only had an exceptionally high v3 (39.53%) and v2 (48.84%), this was also the only statement with 0 per cent for v0 as none of the men selected the most conservative response. In total, 10 men disagreed with this statement representing 11.63 per cent of the respondents. Furthermore, a rather large proportion of the men disagreed (v2 = 45.61%) or strongly disagreed (v3 = 33.72%) with the statement indicating men's emasculation if involved in care and household work: *Men who do women's work in the house are not real men*.

While these positive results are encouraging, it is useful to unpack the less progressive responses (v0+v1) as well. After all, they represent more than one third of the survey responses (36.09%). At this point, it is worth noting, that despite the efforts by the peer-to-peer surveyors to reach a balanced sample of respondents, given surveyors' privileged status as middle-class educated and working men residing in the capital city, Dhaka, some bias in selecting respondents could be anticipated, particularly with respect to education and urban residence. Thus, a rather large yield of 36.09 per cent of the conservative responses requires further examination.

Several statements warrant attention, particularly the statement: *A father should approve his daughter's job, because it is his duty as a father to protect her honour*, whose v0 was attributed to 36.05 per cent of the responses and v1 to 55.81 per cent. These results were underscored by

an extremely low v3 attributed only to one respondent out of 86 men, who strongly disagreed with this statement. Further, the statement: *A good wife never goes anywhere without her husband's approval* also scored rather low. Its v0 was attributed to 25.58 per cent of the responses and v1 to 39.53 per cent. On the other hand, almost one third of the men, or 27.91 per cent, disagreed with this statement (v2). The statement *A woman that brings shame to her father or husband must be punished* had also a rather low score, where v0 was attributed to 20 per cent of all responses and v1 to 47 per cent, meaning that more than two thirds of the men approved a punitive action against women in this context. Low scores were also detected in the statements: *Some jobs are only suitable for men and not for women*, where v0 was attributed to 18.60% responses and, v1 to 55.81%; and *If my wife had a good job, our family would be richer* with v0 in 16.28% and v1 in 34.88% of the responses.

Table 7.3 below summarises statements that yielded most conservative responses. They include statements with conservative leaning (a high v1), despite having low v0.

Table 7.3: Statements with the lowest scores in the survey – Instrument 3

Statement	% of men that selected v0	% of men that selected v1	Total %
<i>A father should approve his daughter's job because, it is his duty as a father to protect her honour</i>	36.05	55.81	91.86
<i>A good wife never goes anywhere without her husband's approval</i>	25.58	39.53	65.11
<i>A woman that brings shame to her father or husband must be punished</i>	20	47	67
<i>Some jobs are only suitable for men and not for women</i>	18.60	55.81	74.41
<i>If my wife had a good job, our family would be richer</i>	16.28	34.88	51.16
<i>I believe, men must spend more time on childcare and household work allowing women to have well-paid jobs</i>	13.95	39.50	53.45
<i>Men do not want women to leave their house because they do not trust other men</i>	5.81	39.53	45.34
<i>Women have too much freedom today</i>	10.47	36.05	46.52
<i>A wife who neglects the household and children because of her employment should be disciplined by her husband</i>	8.14	33.72	41.86
<i>Women do not respect a man who earns less money than them</i>	8.14	32.56	40.70
<i>Without a husband's or a father's control, women spend money excessively</i>	4.65	32.56	37.21
<i>Women with careers neglect their husbands and children</i>	6.98	32.56	39.54

Further analysis of individual responses revealed a less optimistic outlook than the analysis of overall results presented earlier. These results indicate that the largest proportion of

respondents included those men with a score between 40-69 points or so called ‘men in the middle’ of the spectrum (69 men). However, a quarter of the men in this category leaned towards conservative viewpoints (40-49 points), while only four out of 22 men scored 46 and higher. In addition, four out of the twelve most progressive ‘men in the middle’ leaned towards progressive viewpoints (66-69 points).

Two men scored between 8 and 22 points respectively and seven men between 30-39 points. Merging these results with 18 men that achieved low scores in the ‘men in the middle’ category (40-45 points), it can be concluded that the sample of 86 respondents included close to one third of the men with a rather conservative leaning (31.40%). Adding the most progressive category from the ‘men in the middle’ group with the score of 66-69 points to the results of the most progressive group among 86 respondents, it can be concluded that the sample included slightly more than half of the men in the middle section of the spectrum (54.65%), while twelve men represent the most progressive respondents (13.95%). It is worth pointing out that none of the men in the overall sample scored higher than 78 points (1 man); the rest of the respondents in the progressive category scored 74 points or lower out of the total 90 points. The summary of the results is presented in Table 7.4.

Table 7.4: Individual score before and after adjustment – Instrument 3

Total score out of 90 points	≥ 70 points <i>Progressive leaning</i>	40 – 69 points <i>Middle ground</i>	≤ 39 points <i>Conservative leaning</i>
	70-79: 8 men (9.30%)	40-49: 22 men (25.58%)	10-19: 1 man (1.16%)
	80-89: 0 men (0%)	50-59: 35 men (40.70%)	20-29: 1 man (1.16%)
	90: 0 men (0%)	60-69: 12 men (13.95%)	30-39: 7 men (8.14%)
% based on original score⁴⁰	8 men (9.30%)	69 (80.23%)	9 (10.46%)
Total score of 90 points	≥ 66 points <i>Progressive leaning</i>	46 – 65 points <i>Middle ground</i>	≤ 45 points <i>Conservative leaning</i>
% adjusted based on progressive or conservative leaning of ‘men in the middle’	12 men (13.95%)	47 men (54.65%)	27 men (31.40%)

⁴⁰ Due to adjusting the figures into two decimals, the overall result is 99.99% instead of 100%.

The following part further analyses the data according to the main themes explored in Instrument 3, followed by an analysis applying variables with potential impact on men's views.

7.2.2 Men's views from the perspective of key themes

Section 7.2.2 presents the results across four themes considered relevant for the analysis of the linkages between masculinities and women's economic empowerment. These included: 1) women's capabilities and freedoms; 2) women's employment and skills; 3) men's involvement in reproductive work; and 4) men's roles in working towards gender equality.

7.2.2.1 Women's capabilities and freedoms

Several results indicate the respondents' approval of fathers' or husbands' control over women's lives. As noted earlier, this was particularly true with regards to influence over type of employment a daughter would like to have, where 91.86 per cent or 79 out of 86 respondents agreed or strongly agreed ($v_0 + v_1$) that a father should approve his daughter's employment, justified by a father's 'duty' to protect his daughter's honour. More than one third of the men ($v_0 + v_1 = 37.21\%$) also agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that men should control finances as women had tendencies to spend money excessively. This not only indicates restrictions on women's capabilities (e.g. financial independence) but also gender stereotypes about women handling finances. On the other hand, half of all respondents ($v_2 = 51.16\%$) disagreed with such control by men.

Furthermore, the data indicated relatively high support for women's property ownership and having some financial freedoms. The majority of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that it was suspicious if a married woman demanded property in her name ($v_2 + v_3 = 69.77\%$) and also disputed that it was inappropriate for a married woman to have her own personal bank account ($v_2 + v_3 = 80.23\%$).

With regards to less progressive options, several results point to barriers men might impose to impede women's mobility. For the majority of the respondents, a 'good' wife only leaves her house with her husband's consent ($v_0 + v_1 = 65.11\%$). Further, forty per cent of the respondents ($v_0 + v_1 = 40.70\%$) preferred a wife's home-based income generation option due to inappropriateness of her travelling alone. Still, close to sixty per cent of the respondents disagreed with such restriction ($v_2 + v_3 = 59.30\%$). Restricting women's mobility also

appeared to be much more strongly justified by distrusting other men and their behaviour towards women, rather than distrusting women themselves. Almost half of all respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement on mistrusting other men ($v_0 + v_1 = 48.83\%$) in comparison to less than a quarter of the men ($v_0 + v_1 = 23.25\%$) who mistrusted women.

On the other hand, while the overwhelming majority of the respondents may have stronger trust in women ($v_2 + v_3 = 76.74\%$), as a group they also overwhelmingly supported punishment of women who, in their understanding, would bring shame to their husband or father. Overall 67 out of 86 respondents agreed or strongly agreed with a punitive action against women in such situations ($v_0 + v_1 = 77.91\%$).

7.2.2.2 Attitudes on women's employment and skills

A similar disparity in results was detected in the respondents' attitudes on women's employment and skills. While the majority of the men agreed or strongly agreed that women and men did not have equal work opportunities in Bangladesh and women faced more obstacles in the labour market ($v_2 + v_3 = 83.72\%$), the men's gender stereotypes regarding women's abilities were also revealed.

Close to three quarters of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that some jobs were not suitable for women ($v_0 + v_1 = 74.41\%$). Furthermore, 38.37 per cent of the men agreed or strongly agreed that women's businesses failed due to the fact that women were not as capable as men to run a business ($v_0 + v_1$). This stereotype was, however, disapproved of by more than half of the respondents, including 18.60 per cent of the men who strongly disagreed with this statement (v_3).

Yet, gender stereotypes seemed prevalent. For example, 39.54 per cent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that women with careers neglected their husband and children ($v_0 + v_1$), while 41.86 per cent would agree or strongly agree with disciplining a wife who neglected the household and children as a result of paid work ($v_0 + v_1$). A similar proportion of the respondents revealed their fear of a professionally and financially successful partner. Some 40.70 per cent of them agreed or strongly agreed that women did not respect a man who earned less money than his wife ($v_0 + v_1$).

More respondents seemed to accept women in leadership roles. Overall, 76.75 per cent of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that men would be belittled if

they were supervised by a woman in their workplace ($v_2 + v_3$). This result includes almost twenty per cent of the men who strongly disagreed with this statement ($v_3 = 19.77\%$). Further, 69.77 per cent disagreed or strongly disagreed that women could not be good leaders due to being too emotional to carry out such a role. Almost one third of the men, however, still believed in this stereotype ($v_0 + v_1 = 30.23\%$).

The survey data suggest strong support by the men for women's and girls' education and skills development. The overwhelming majority agreed or strongly agreed with supporting his wife or daughter to join skill development training ($v_2 + v_3 = 93.03$). Only two men out of 86 respondents strongly disagreed with such support (v_0). Overall, 27 of the men strongly agreed with such support ($v_3 = 31.40\%$).

Men's positive attitudes were also translated in supporting continued education of daughters with good school results, even if this would mean postponing their marriage. In total, 76 out of 86 respondents held this positive view ($v_2 + v_3$), while supporting daughters' continued education was strongly agreed with by almost half of all respondents ($v_3 = 48.84\%$) – the highest positive score amongst all thirty statements. In addition, the respondents were also largely supportive of equal access to financial management education offered at school to boys and girls, which was agreed or strongly agreed with by 88.37 per cent of the respondents ($v_2 + v_3$), with almost half of the men strongly agreeing with such type of learning by girls as well as boys ($v_3 = 47.67\%$).

Furthermore, the men were relatively supportive of women's paid employment, while also having a social life outside family. A quarter of the respondents strongly agreed with this statement ($v_3 = 25.58\%$) and almost half agreed with it ($v_2 = 47.67\%$). However, the results may also indicate men's reluctance to accept a woman's major role in providing for family as half of the men disagreed or strongly disagreed that a wife's job could improve family wellbeing ($v_0 + v_1 = 51.16\%$). This group included a relatively high proportion of the men who strongly disagreed with this statement ($v_0 = 16.28\%$).

7.2.2.3 Men's involvement in care and household work

Given the relevance of gender division of labour at household level for women's employment, the peer-to-peer survey was also interested in exploring men's attitudes on care and household work. The analysis of the responses revealed somewhat ambiguous results. Overall, 53.48 per

cent of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that men should spend more time on care and household work to allow women obtain a better-paid job ($v_0 + v_1$). From the opposite perspective, however, it can also mean that there is a relatively high percentage of men that might be willing to assume such responsibilities in the household. Close to one third of the men agreed with this statement ($v_2 = 31.40\%$) and 15.12% strongly agreed with it (v_3). This, however, might not mean that these men would assume an equal proportion of these responsibilities.

An overwhelming majority of respondents did not perceive men's involvement in household activities as emasculating. A surprising 80.23% disagreed or strongly disagreed that men who did 'women's' work in the household were not real men ($v_2 + v_3$). This group of men included one third of the respondents who strongly disagreed with this statement ($v_3 = 33.72\%$). These data contrast with the findings indicating the respondents' relatively high approval of disciplining a wife if she neglected household and children due to her paid work. More than forty percent of the men agreed or strongly agreed with this statement ($v_0 + v_1 = 41.86\%$).

7.2.2.4 Men's involvement in supporting women's rights

Given the significance of the issue of violence against women and girls in Bangladesh, the peer-to-peer survey aimed to find out how proactive the respondents would be in intervening, if witnessing a man mistreating his wife or children. The results pointed towards a proactive role by men. Overall, close to seventy percent of the respondents considered intervening in such situations as their 'duty' ($v_2 + v_3 = 69.77\%$), including one fifth of the men who strongly agreed with it ($v_3 = 20.93\%$). Less than 5 per cent of the men strongly disagreed ($v_0 = 4.65\%$), although one quarter still disagreed with intervening ($v_1 = 25.58\%$). These positive results could be further supported by the men's support for educating boys to respect women, which was agreed with or strongly agreed with by 76 out of 86 respondents ($v_2 + v_3 = 88.37\%$). No respondent strongly disagreed with this statement ($v_0 = 0\%$), while 10 men disagreed with it ($v_1 = 11.63\%$).

Finally, there was relatively high support for men's involvement (alongside women) in working towards equality between women and men. Only 6.98 per cent of the men strongly disagreed with this statement (v_0), while 18.60 per cent disagreed with it (v_1). One third of the respondents declared their strong support for such men's co-responsibility ($v_3 = 32.56\%$), in addition to a relatively high number of the respondents who agreed with it ($v_2 = 41.86\%$).

These positive results were, however, offset by the less progressive viewpoint that women had too much freedom, supported by 46.52 per cent of the respondents with more than one third of respondents who agreed with this statement ($v1=36.05$). On the other hand, there was a compelling majority of the respondents for whom a wife's and a daughter's happiness was important. In total, 79 out of 86 men (91.86%) agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, scoring high in both $v2$ (51.16%) and $v3$ (40.70).

7.3 Exploring men's responses by applying selected variables

As noted earlier, despite the training on identifying a balanced sample, the peer-to-peer surveyors appeared to select respondents with higher education and an urban residence. This could not be fully verified as a substantial number of survey forms omitted the demographic data of respondents which complicated the analysis of the impact of variables in the responses. In addition, some parts of the original survey forms could not be retrieved due to travel restrictions imposed in Bangladesh during the Covid-19 pandemic. For this reason, the analysis selected three variables (age, rural-urban continuum, socio-economic status), for which data were consistently available in a proportion of the forms. This yielded a sample of eighteen respondents (20 per cent of 86 respondents) presented in Table 7.5.

Table 7.5: Respondents in the analysis of key variables – Instrument 3

Respondent no.	Age	Rural/Urban residence*	Socio-economic status (education/employment proxy)	Score (out of total 90 points)
Respondent 1	50	Urban	Graduate	52
Respondent 2	34	Urban	Primary (8 years)	41
Respondent 3	80	Urban	Primary (8 years)	41
Respondent 4	39	Rural	Graduate	45
Respondent 5	26	Rural	Graduate (NGO)	72
Respondent 6	36	Urban	Secondary	56
Respondent 7	30	Urban	Graduate (NGO)	49
Respondent 8	39	Urban	Graduate	55
Respondent 9	24	Rural	Primary (2 years)	47
Respondent 10	51	Rural	Secondary	59
Respondent 11	52	Urban	Graduate	58
Respondent 12	27	Urban	Graduate	45
Respondent 13	40	Urban	Graduate	46
Respondent 14	41	Urban	Graduate	38
Respondent 15	40	Urban	Graduate	39
Respondent 16	39	Urban	Graduate	44
Respondent 17	56	Rural	Graduate	47
Respondent 18	27	Urban	Graduate	40

* In three cases the residence could be considered peri-urban but for simplicity of data analysis, these respondents were grouped with the urban residence respondents.

Taking into consideration the age of the respondents, and excluding a young employee of a non-governmental organisation (NGO), the average score of the men in their 20s, 30s and 40s was approximately similar (44, 48, 41 points respectively) and comparable to the score of the only elderly respondent in the sample in his eighties (41 points).

The respondents with the lowest average score were the men in their forties, including two men with the lowest score out of eighteen respondents. The average score of all respondents under

41, with the exception of the NGO worker, was lower by ten points in comparison to the average score of the four men in their fifties.

The respondents with rural or small-town residence scored 54 points on average, while urban respondents scored 46 points. Excluding the NGO worker, the score of the rural/small town respondents was still higher (49.5 points).

The sample further included two respondents with completed primary level (8 years of schooling), one respondent with two years at primary level, and two respondents with completed secondary level (12 years). The three men with the lowest education scored comparably to their age group with a slightly higher score of the young man from a rural area with the lowest education (47 points). Two men with secondary education scored much higher (56 and 59 points respectively). One of the men (51 years old) scored comparably with his age group, while the 36-year-old respondent scored above average of his age group (56 points compared to 48 points).

Surprisingly, there was a rather limited difference between the average score of the graduates (46.5 points), even when including the highest scoring NGO worker (48.5 points), and the least educated men (43 points on average). The scores were also comparable between the rural/small town graduates (50 points or 43 when excluding the young NGO worker) and their urban counterparts (46 points). Moreover, the younger urban graduates in their 20s, 30s and 40s scored lower (44 points on average) than the urban graduates in their 50s (55 points on average). It was the young rural/small town graduate and NGO worker who scored the highest (72 points) in the sample of 18 respondents. His score was much higher than that of the second NGO worker, an urban graduate in his 30s, who scored (49 points).

The analysis was further interested in exploring the respondents' position on specific issues, by applying a multivariate analysis. The average scores per variable and specific issue are presented in Table 7.6, followed by a brief analysis. The corresponding number of the survey statement in the form (Annex 6) is included in brackets (Q).

Table 7.6: Average score per issue and a variable category – Instrument 3

Issue/Variable	Age				Residence		Education		
	20s	30s-40s	50s	80s	Rural/Town	Urban	Prim.	Second.	Graduate
Approval of daughter's job by father (Q11)	0.75	0.78	1.5	1	0.83	1	1	1	0.92
Approval of women's mobility by husband (Q7)	1.25	1.17	1.25	1	1.33	1.16	1	2	1.15
Men's control over finance (Q16)	1.25	1.67	1.5	1	1.83	1.33	1.33	2	1.46
Wife's employment restricted to home (Q8)	2	1.11	1.75	1	2	1.17	1.33	1.5	1.46
Punishment due to shame caused by woman (Q26)	1.25	1.25	1.75	1	1.17	1.42	0.67	2	1.38
Disciplining due to neglect of wife's house-work (Q21)	1.25	1.56	1.5	2	1.67	1.42	1.67	2	1.38
Men's intervention when witnessing violence (Q27)	1.75	1.44	1.5	2	1.33	1.67	2	1.5	1.46
Mobility linked to mistrust of women by men (Q9)	1.5	1.44	1.75	1	1.67	1.58	1.33	2	1.62
Mobility linked to mistrust of men by men (Q10)	1	1.33	1.25	1	1.33	1.25	1.33	1.5	1.23
Woman's children neglect due to her career (Q12)	1.5	1.83	1.75	1	1.17	1.5	1	2	1.38
Woman's job contributes to family prosperity (Q13)	1	1.33	1.75	2	1.33	1.42	1.33	1.5	1.38
Women's property and personal account (Q15+17)	1.67	1.72	1.75	1	2	1.5	1.17	2.25	1.69
Women's and girls' learning (Q2+4+5)	2.23	2.05	2.5	2	2.22	2.21	2	2.17	2.08
Awareness of labour market inequality by men (Q18)	1.75	2.22	1.5	3	2	1.92	1.67	2	1.83
Stereotypes about women's business failure (Q3)	1.5	1.33	1.75	1	1.83	1.33	1.33	2	1.46
Women's job discrimination (Q19)	1.25	1.11	1.5	1	1.5	1.17	1.33	1.5	1.15
Boys' preference in jobs and education (Q1)	1.25	1.22	1.75	1	1.88	1.08	1.33	2	1.33
Men's lack of respect if wife earns more (Q22)	2	1.44	2	1	1.67	1.67	1	2	1.77
Men's emasculation if led by women (Q23)	1.5	1.78	1.5	2	1.67	1.67	1.67	1.5	1.69
Stereotypes about women's leadership (Q24)	2.25	1.44	1.25	1	1.67	1.5	1.33	2	1.54
Men's involvement in reproductive work (Q14)	1.25	1.33	2	1	1.67	1.33	1	2	1.46
Men belittled if involved in reproductive work (Q20)	2.5	1.67	2	0	2.17	1.67	0.67	2	2.08
Women having 'excessive' freedoms (Q25)	1.75	1.11	2	1	1.5	1.33	1.33	2	1.31
Approval of women having life outside family (Q6)	2	1.89	1.75	2	2.17	1.75	2	2	1.85
Women's happiness prioritised (Q28)	2.5	1.89	2.25	2	2	2.17	2.33	2	2.08
Teaching boys to respect women (Q29)	2.25	2.11	2.5	3	2.17	2.33	2	2.5	2.31
Men working with women on gender equality (Q30)	2.25	1.44	1.75	1	1.33	1.83	1	2	1.77

The data presented in Table 7.6 suggest that the four respondents in their fifties with secondary and tertiary education appeared more progressive on a number of responses in comparison to other age cohorts. This was also applicable in some statements that in general scored very low, whereas these men scored on average 1.5 – 2 points per statement indicating their progressive leaning. These low-score statements concerned the following positive attitudes:

- 1) weaker agreement with father's approval of daughter's employment to protect her honour (Q11=1.5);
- 2) support to men's involvement in reproductive work (Q14=2);
- 3) lower support for boys' preferential treatment in accessing education and employment (Q1=1.75);
- 4) lower stereotypes about women's business failure (Q3=1.75); and
- 5) lower approval of women's punishment due to 'shame' (Q26=1.75).

The four youngest respondents in the sample in their twenties, including three graduates and one man with the lowest education, revealed a high degree of ambiguity in their attitudes. While they selected progressive options (v2 or v3) in certain statements, they also revealed persistent stereotypes and prejudices across a range of other issues. The most conservative responses were provided by two 27-year-old graduates on the following issues:

- 1) involvement in reproductive work (Q14=0.5);
- 2) men's emasculation if led by women in workplace (Q23=1);
- 3) women's labour discrimination due to stereotypical perception of women's abilities (Q19=1);
- 4) preferential treatment of boys in access to education and employment (Q1=0);
- 5) women's disciplining by men due to 'neglect' of reproductive responsibilities caused by women's paid job (Q21=1);
- 6) stereotypical perception of women handling finances (Q16=1); and
- 7) father's approval of daughter's employment (Q11=1).

These young graduates' overall score was comparable to that achieved by two men with primary education.

The university graduates in this sample (13 out of 18 men) scored much lower than expected, in particular the younger graduates in their forties and younger. There was, however, a marked difference in their attitudes in some issues in comparison with the three men with the lowest education. The graduates revealed the following positive attitudes (the scores by two men with secondary education is also included where relevant):

- 1) stronger agreement with men's involvement in gender equality promotion (Q30=1.77/1.89);
- 2) rejection of men's emasculation if involved in reproductive work (Q20=2.08/2.04);
- 3) lower agreement with men's emasculation if wife earns more (Q22=1.77/1.89);
- 4) stronger trust of women linked to mobility (Q9=1.62/1.81);
- 5) stronger approval of women's property ownership and personal account (Q15+17=1.69/1.97); and
- 6) stronger tendency to disagree with women's having 'too much' freedom (Q25=1.71).

Furthermore, the five men in the group of the rural/small town respondents, including four graduates and one man with primary education, also provided relatively progressive responses on a number of issues, including:

- 1) disapproval of restricting wife's job to home-bound employment (Q8=2);
- 2) lower perception of men's emasculation if involved in reproductive work (Q20=1.67);
- 3) lower stereotypes about women's handling finances (Q16=1.83);
- 4) lower stereotypes about failure of women's businesses (Q3=1.83); and
- 5) weaker agreement with boys' preferential treatment in accessing education and employment (Q1=1.88).

The last figure was markedly higher when compared to the average response by the urban (Dhaka) respondents (Q1=1.08). It is worth noting that the respondents in rural/small town group included four men in their twenties and fifties as well as four men with at least secondary education, which could explain higher scoring in this category.

Furthermore, the three men with the lowest education also scored high in some issues, but revealed deeply rooted patriarchal attitudes. Specifically, these men:

- 1) strongly agreed with punishment of women if their behaviour would lead to men's 'shame' (Q26=0.67). However, they were less concerned about a woman's 'neglect' of reproductive tasks due to her paid work (Q21=1.67). In fact, the latter score was higher than the average score of graduates (1.38).
- 2) showed no support to men's involvement in supporting equality of women and men (Q30=1);
- 3) agreed with the patriarchal view on women having 'too much' freedom (Q25=1.33);
- 4) held a rather strong prejudice against men's involvement in reproductive work (Q20=0.67);
- 5) rejected men's involvement in reproductive work to facilitate women's employment (Q14=1);
- 6) agreed with the stereotype of men's lower respect by women when women earned higher income (Q22=1);
- 7) disagreed with women having a personal bank account and property (Q15+17=1.17); and
- 8) agreed with the stereotype that women with careers neglect children (Q12=1).

On the more positive side, the men with the lowest education appeared to:

- 1) agree with intervening when witnessing violence against women (Q27=2) in comparison to lower support to such an action by graduates (1.46).
- 2) appeared to be in favour of women's and girls' education (Q2+4+5=2);
- 3) supported teaching boys to respect women (Q29=2), and
- 4) prioritised women's happiness over family and community opinion (Q28=2.33).

The last two issues received generally high scores across all categories, including the responses by the man in his 80s with primary education. This man scored high (v2 or v3) in a range of issues:

- 1) teaching boys to respect women (Q29=3);
- 2) awareness of women's labour market obstacles (Q18=3);
- 3) men's intervention when witnessing violence (Q27=2);

- 4) rejection of emasculation if led by a woman (Q23=2);
- 5) agreement with positive impact of women's paid work on family wellbeing (Q13=2);
- 6) rejection of punishment if a woman neglects reproductive work due to her job (Q21=2);
- 7) approval of women's life outside of the family (Q6=2); and
- 8) support to women's and girls' education (Q2, 4, 5=2).

Based on the discussion above, education/social status and age appeared a significant marker influencing the respondents' attitudes, at least in some specific issues, while residence did not provide any conclusive results. Moreover, the multivariate analysis highlighted the significance of studying the interrelated impact of some variables, including education/social status and age, on men's attitudes.

7.4 Key findings from the analysis of men's attitudes on women's economic empowerment

While taking into consideration a possible urban and education (graduate level) bias in the respondent sample, more than one-third of the responses (36%) with v0 and v1 indicate a relatively high prevalence of conservative viewpoints in the sample of 86 male respondents. This result is correlated with the analysis of the men's individual scores (adjusted for borderline progressive or conservative responses of 'the men in the middle') that indicates that close to one third of all respondents (31.40%) scored rather low (less than 40 points out of 90) suggesting conservative attitudes of these respondents about women's economic freedoms.

One fifth of all responses (20.66%) suggested progressive leaning of the respondents (v3). However, the individual scores revealed a much smaller number of men that scored at least 70 points (8 men; after adjusting the cut-off score to 66 points, 12 men). As noted previously, none of the men scored higher than 80 points out of 90. These results indicate that only a small number of the men held consistently progressive viewpoints on women's economic freedoms.

Keeping a possible urban and higher education bias in the sample selection in mind, the low number of progressive men in the sample indicates that a higher level of education and an urban residence did not translate into men's higher progressiveness regarding women's economic capabilities. This was confirmed by the multivariate analysis of the sample of 18 respondents which did not identify a significant difference between the average score of the graduates and the least educated men (albeit that sample was low), while the scores were also comparable between the rural/small town graduates and their urban counterparts.

Based on the individual scoring, the largest proportion of the men in the sample represented the so-called 'men in the middle', who before adjustment, included 80.23 per cent (69 men). After adjustment for the borderline scores, this category still included more than half of the respondents (54.65% or 47 men). This means that a relatively high number of the men demonstrated ambivalence in their responses regarding women's economic freedoms.

This ambivalence is best explained through the analysis of specific responses. Firstly, despite a relatively high overall proportion of low individual scores, indicating conservative attitudes, some statements on women's economic freedoms received a rather high degree of approval by the respondents. This means that a high proportion of the men selected the most progressive (v3) and the second most progressive (v2) options, including the men that held conservative positions on other issues.

The statements that were selected by 74.42 – 90.03 per cent of the respondents concerned the following positive attitudes by men: 1) supporting women's and girls' education; 2) valuing women's and girls' happiness; 3) acknowledging women's discrimination in the labour market; 4) involving men in ensuring equality between women and men; 5) teaching boys to respect women; and 6) rejecting gender-based stereotypes about men's involvement in reproductive work.

A different set of results might have been obtained if the peer-to-peer survey took place only in rural areas and while targeting men with lower education level. While there was only one rural respondent with low education in the multivariate sample, which did not allow conducting an analysis for this category of respondents, the analysis of the responses by the three men with the lowest education (one from a rural area and two from urban zones) indicated mixed results.

Several issues received rather strong support by the least educated men, including: 1) intervening when witnessing violence against women; 2) supporting women's and girls' education; 3) teaching boys to respect women, and 4) prioritising women's happiness over family and community opinion. While these are important positive attitudes, they also suggest support to women's practical needs (protection from violence, building skills, contentment), rather than paying attention to underlying causes of gender inequalities crucial for women's economic empowerment (Molyneux, 1985; Moser, 1989).

In fact, the multivariate analysis uncovered strong adherence to certain patriarchal views by the men with low education, contrary to the views held by the men with at least secondary level education. These included the following: 1) supporting violence against and control over women (punishment of women if their behaviour led to men's 'shame'; opposition to women's personal account and property ownership); 2) preserving patriarchal gender division of labour (prejudice against men's involvement in reproductive work; no support to men's involvement in reproductive work to facilitate women's employment; perception of men's emasculation if a wife earned higher income; agreement with the stereotype that women with careers neglect children); and 3) hindering women's advancement (no support to men's involvement in supporting equality of women and men; belief that women have 'too much' freedom). These negative attitudes uncover rather strong patriarchal resistance (Ratele, 2015) to women's economic freedoms by the men with low education underpinned by maintaining patriarchal control over and disciplining of women (Bartky, 1988; Kandiyoti, 1988; Chowdhury, 2009).

With respect to conservative attitudes, there were, however, several issues that received a rather conservative response by the majority of the respondents (selected by 65-91% of men). This indicates relative persistence of certain patriarchal attitudes even amongst the men having open-minded positions on a large number of other issues. The low-scoring statements selected by the majority of the respondents included the following: 1) a father's approval of his daughter's job linked to protecting her honour; 2) gender stereotypes about women's abilities; 3) approval of punishment of a wife/daughter that brings shame to husband/father; and 4) husband's approval of wife's mobility.

These conservative attitudes appeared also in the responses by the graduates in the multivariate sample. In fact, the graduates in their thirties and early forties demonstrated particularly conservative views on a number of issues. It should also be noted that graduates in their twenties also achieved relatively low scores, with the exception of one NGO worker whose rather high score might be related to his on-the job training on 'gender' equality. On the contrary, based on the multivariate analysis, the men in their fifties with at least secondary education appeared more progressive in their responses. These results dispute a linear generational evolution of men's attitudes (Connell, 2005; Chen and Mac an Ghail, 2017; Hasan, Aggleton and Persson, 2018); i.e. older men can hold more progressive views than younger men, at least with respect to some issues.

Six other statements that also revealed rather conservative attitudes by a large proportion of the respondents draw attention to men's prevalent resistance to abandon gender stereotypical division of labour and men's attachment to their primary breadwinner role. The conservative options (v0 or v1) for these statements were selected by 37-53% of the respondents and included the following claims: 1) *If my wife had a good job, our family would be richer*; 2) *I believe, men must spend more time on childcare and household work allowing women to have well-paid jobs*; 3) *A wife who neglects the household and children because of her employment should be disciplined by her husband*; 4) *Women do not respect a man who earns less money than them*; 5) *Women with careers neglect their husbands and children*; 6) *Without a husband's or a father's control, women spend money excessively*. Such men's resistance to instituting a more balanced gender division of labour at household level undermines women's economic empowerment.

With respect to potential violence against women and girls, the respondents' high approval of punitive actions against a wife or a daughter that brings 'shame' to her husband/father, agreed

by two thirds of the men, is particularly worrying. This is in addition to the agreement with disciplining a wife that neglects household and children because of her employment by 42 per cent of the respondents. These results point to continued reluctance of a large segment of Bangladeshi men to relinquish such practices as discussed with respect to Bangladesh by several authors (Ahmed, 2008, 2014; Heath, 2014; Anwary, 2015; Khan et al., 2017).

On the other hand, almost seventy per cent of the respondents agreed with intervening if witnessing violence against women, including one fifth of the men who strongly agreed with this statement ($v3 = 20.93$). These results are encouraging. However, they also point to the rift between men's perceived public responsibility to intervene against (at least some forms of) violence against women and girls, and their attitudes (and potentially behaviour) in the privacy of their households pointing to Minow's paradox (Pease, 2006).

Linked with the above, while the overwhelming majority of the men perceived a wife's and daughter's happiness more important than family and community opinion ($v2+v3 = 91.86$), this result sits uncomfortably with the men's high approval of disciplining women. Clearly, 'happiness' is an ambiguous, discursively constructed, and gendered concept. Nonetheless, the significance of contributing to a wife's/daughter's happiness for the respondents can open up opportunities of engaging men in a dialogue on women's economic empowerment. This can be approached with the overall objective of achieving positive family and social relationships between women and men (hooks, 1998; Ahmed, 2008, 2014; Pease, 2014).

A surprising majority of the 80.23 per cent of the men disagreed or strongly disagreed that men who did 'women's' work in the house were not real men ($v2 + v3$) suggesting that reproductive work was not perceived detrimental to manhood (with the exception of the perceptions by the least educated men). One third of the respondents strongly disagreed with this statement ($v3 = 33.72\%$). Even when accounting for a possible exaggeration in the men's positive responses by, say, 25 per cent⁴¹, this result would still be relatively high. This can indicate that many men do not avoid reproductive work due to feeling emasculated by it, but for other reasons, including a possible unwillingness to give up the patriarchal privilege of being provided with reproductive services by women and/or keeping their free time for other activities.

⁴¹ This percentage roughly corresponds to the quarter of the respondents with the adjusted borderline conservative leaning of 'the men in the middle'.

An almost equal split between the men that acknowledged the need to engage in reproductive activities to facilitate women's paid work and those that rejected it can be indicative of openness of some men to renegotiate their share of reproductive work, particularly in case of their wife's employment, although this might not be yet translated in the attitudes of less-educated men. As highlighted earlier, assuming a larger (if not equal) share of reproductive responsibilities at household level is a crucial goal of women's economic empowerment. This could be facilitated by appealing to men's increased solidarity with women, identifying certain benefits for men (e.g. less conflict at household level) or encouraging men to find enjoyment in such activities (hooks, 1998; Connell, 2005; Flood, 2005; Pease, 2014), as demonstrated by one respondent in Instrument 5 (Men's interpretations of WEE strategies).

Furthermore, a relatively high number of the respondents appeared to be in favour of women's property ownership and having her own bank account as almost seventy per cent of the respondents disagreed that it was suspicious if a married woman demanded property in her own name (v2 + v3) and eighty per cent rejected that it was inappropriate for a married woman to have her own personal account (v2 + v3). Based on the multivariate analysis, only the men with low education demonstrated low support for ownership by women of property and an independent bank account, which also pointed to mistrust of women by low-income men when it comes to asset control. While these results are still positive, they reiterate the problem with the earlier conclusion on men's tendency to support women's practical needs, while potentially neglecting underlying obstacles to women's economic empowerment (such as the prevalence of men's stereotypes about women's abilities).

Linked with the above, the survey confirmed a continuous challenge for women in Bangladesh to secure their freedom of movement. According to the results, two thirds of the respondents believed that a 'good wife' should always seek permission from her husband if she wanted to leave home. Based on the multivariate analysis, this attitude was also largely supported by the younger, urban and graduate respondents. In addition, forty percent of the respondents preferred that a wife's paid work was home-bound as it was 'inappropriate' for her to travel alone. Mobility is not only a woman's practical need but a crucial aspect in undermining men's patriarchal control over women that is conducive to women's economic empowerment, as highlighted in the focus group discussions with low-income women (Instrument 1 and 2).

Women's/girls' education and skills development was one area that attracted exceptional support by almost all respondents. This included support for continued education of daughters

with good school results, even if this would mean postponing their marriage ($v_2 + v_3 = 88.37\%$); equal access to financial management education ($v_2 + v_3 = 88.37\%$); and support for women's skill-based training ($v_2 + v_3 = 100\%$). Such positive attitudes by men are crucial for women's enhancement of capabilities beneficial to their chances in labour market. Still, it is worth remembering that such support for women's practical needs is not necessarily conducive to enhancing women's equality with men, as it can be insufficient in addressing underlying barriers impeding women's economic empowerment.

Indeed, the survey results confirmed that a high proportion of men acknowledged women's labour discrimination ($v_2 + v_3 = 83.72\%$), but a high proportion of them also agreed with the gender stereotypes on women's inability to perform certain jobs ($v_0 + v_1 = 74.41\%$) and on women's failure in entrepreneurial activities ($v_0 + v_1 = 38.37\%$). In addition, 60.46 per cent of the respondents ($v_0 + v_1$) supported preferential treatment of boys in accessing education and employment given their expected role as primary breadwinner. More than one fifth of the men strongly agreed with boys' preferential treatment. While men's support for women's practical needs is vital for women's economic empowerment, it can still co-exist with patriarchal attitudes and gender norms that undermine women's economic rights.

It appears that the respondents were much more open-minded with respect to women's capabilities in the public domain (education, employment, representation) than within the privacy of the men's households (support to unequal household labour division, restriction of women's mobility, preference of punitive action against women, men's primary breadwinner role). A large majority of the men did not object to women's leadership, including in the workplace. Overall, 76.75 per cent of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that men would be belittled if they were supervised by a woman in their workplace and 69.77 per cent disagreed or strongly disagreed that women could not be good leaders due to being too emotional to carry out such a role.

In addition, the men were relatively supportive of women's paid employment while also having a social life outside family. A quarter of the respondents strongly agreed with this statement ($v_3 = 25.58\%$) and almost half agreed with it ($v_2 = 47.67\%$). These attitudes can be conducive to increasing women's public representation roles, while keeping in mind that female leaders might participate in patriarchal complicity and/or be affected by personal patriarchal systems in their families (Pheterson, 1986; Rowland, 1995; Phillips, 2004; Pease, 2014).

The respondents' apprehension about a working independent woman emerged quite prominently in the survey as almost forty per cent of the respondents believed women with careers neglected their husband and children; over forty per cent of the men thought a wife that earned higher income would not respect her husband; and over forty per cent did not believe a wife's job would improve family wellbeing. Based on the multivariate analysis, such attitudes were not only prevalent amongst the men with the lowest education, but also the graduates residing in urban areas in their early forties and younger.

Finally, the last question in the survey regarding men's co-responsibility in ensuring equal rights of women and men, alongside women, might have carried a different meaning for each respondent, while the findings might have yielded somewhat biased results as three quarters of the men agreed or strongly agreed with this statement (v3 + v2). Yet, these results can also be an indication of the respondents' awareness of expectations from them in a society undergoing social (and economic) transformation, indicating the shift towards normalising more progressive masculinities.

Keen interest of the respondents from various walks of life in the survey (confirmed by the peer-to-peer surveyors) can also suggest there is a large interest of Bangladeshi (Muslim) men to engage in a dialogue on women's economic empowerment, potentially followed by concrete actions by men to contribute to enhancing equality between women and men.

In summary, the survey confirmed that the Bangladeshi Muslim men in the survey, are not a monolithic group (Ouzgan, 2006; Chakraborty, 2014; Hasan, Aggleton and Persson, 2018) adhering to one specific hegemonic masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). The diversity of views presented in the survey instead points to heterogeneity of masculinity performativity (Butler, 2007). These included heterogeneity with respect to specific attitudes as well as particular variables, most notably age and education/social status of the respondents.

Such heterogeneity emphasises the importance of considering empowerment, whether by men or women, as convoluted processes, while being aware that some men's attitudes are based on conscious biases, while others stem from unconscious preconceptions about femininities (and masculinities). In addition, the survey results demonstrated that the linkages between individual conscientisation (Freire, 1970) and collective support to certain attitudes reflected the 'messy' reality of such processes.

Given the methodology of this research, there were some marked differences between three broader categories of the men in the peer-to-peer survey: those with conservative tendencies,

‘the men in the middle’, and those with progressive tendencies. In addition, some unexpected groups that could act as Advocates, or, on the contrary, Antagonists, were also uncovered in the multivariate analysis. Based on the results, erosion of patriarchal masculinities was mostly observed within the small group of progressive men and within ‘the men in the middle’ in certain issues. Based on the survey, the men with rather conservative leaning mostly adhered to patriarchal masculinities, while some ‘men in the middle’ also appeared to emulate patriarchal masculinities in certain aspects.

Additionally, the survey revealed several tendencies in the men’s responses, including: 1) inclination to support women’s practical needs rather than gender-transformative attitudes; 2) persistence of certain patriarchal attitudes even among more progressive men; and 3) tendency to be supportive of women’s freedoms in the public domain but maintain some level of personal patriarchy.

The maintenance of the respondents’ personal patriarchy points to the possibility of reinventing men’s patriarchal privilege within the shifting social context in Bangladesh (Connell, 2005; Chen and Mac an Ghail, 2017). It should be also kept in mind that the respondents’ progressive views with respect to women’s freedoms in the public domain might not necessarily translate in actual progressive behaviours and practices by men, given likely deeply-rooted internalisation of patriarchal power by men (Pheterson, 1986; Pease, 2014). In addition, some of the results in the survey raised the question whether the respondents deliberately wanted to appear more progressive. This, however, does not have to be taken altogether negatively – it can point to the respondents’ awareness of what is expected of them in a socially (and economically) transforming country, even if some resist these changes more than others.

Chapter 8 Construction of Muslim Masculinities and Positioning towards Women's Economic Empowerment

8.1 Introduction

Chapter 8 further contributes to an in-depth exploration of masculinities and their positioning towards women's economic empowerment (WEE) in the discourse by Muslim men. Chapter 8 draws on the interactions with twelve Muslim men through a life history methodology (Instrument 4) creating an opportunity to examine the construction of manhood of these men in relation to several critical aspects of WEE. This inquiry was conducted within a broader context of men's memories, interpretations of particular events and experiences as well as their relationships and exposure to normative guidance experienced from early childhood up to adulthood (De Beauvoir, 1949; Connell, 2005; Butler, 2007). The narrations followed several pre-selected themes, while giving the narrators freedom to contemplate their own memories and experiences. Key themes explored included: sense of men's personhood; childhood and family life; relationships with others, including father, mother, other women and men. The findings are presented in three sections concerned with normative frameworks that emerged in narrations (Section 8.2); masculinity positionings towards WEE in public and private spheres (Section 8.3); and weight of variables and other contextual divergence in men's accounts (Section 8.4). Section 8.5 analyses the empirical findings and provides key conclusions.

The life history narrations were collected between April and August 2019. The narrators' selection process applied a combined methodology of purposeful and random selection based on pre-defined criteria to achieve a sufficient level of diversity in the group. The criteria included the following: adult male Muslim, Bangladeshi nationality, willingness to participate, age, religious affiliation, disability, location, social status. The details of the narrators are presented in Table 8.1 The number of children and their gender (female=♀; male=♂) is included in brackets in the column on marital status and children. The analysis of the results is based on the English transcripts of the audio-recorded face-to-face interaction between narrators and the author. Four meetings were conducted in Bengali, interpreted by a male interpreter during narration, and the remaining eight were conducted in English led by the author. All participants were offered a possibility to review the transcript; four provided amendments to the draft texts.

Table 8.1: Twelve life history narrators – Instrument 4

<i>Age</i>	<i>Marital status and children</i>	<i>Education level</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Wealth status</i>	<i>Disability</i>	<i>Religious affiliation</i>	<i>Origin (divisions) and current residence</i>
2 in 20s 1 in 30s 6 in 40s 3 in 50s	1 single (0) 1 married (0) 1 married (1♂) 1 married (1♀) 1 married (2♀) 1 married (2♂) 3 married (1♀, 1♂) 1 married (3♀) 1 married (3♂) 1 married (2♀, 1♂)	2 with primary education 2 with secondary level 8 with university degree	student teacher driver waiter electrician accountant in NGO managers in NGOs (6)	4 low-income 6 middle-income 2 upper income	2 disabled 10 without disability	3 men with strong affiliation 5 men with moderate affiliation 4 men with weak affiliation	Dhaka Chattogram Rangpur Rajshahi Khulna Barisal 3 currently residing in rural area 1 in urban periphery 8 in urban areas

8.2 Relating men's narrations to normative frameworks

The following section identifies the evidence of reference frameworks in the men's personal narrations. These included the following: 1) socially constructed gender norms; 2) patriarchal privilege; and 3) heteronormativity.

8.2.1 Socially constructed gender norms

All respondents, in one way or another, grappled with explaining differences between women and men and what made them the man they were today. The men used a range of notions to talk about themselves:

'I am a rational man.'

'Whatever I do in my life has to have purpose.'

'Biological differences [with women] define me as a man.'

'I am trying to be a good man and contribute to society.'

'My family has made me the man I am today.'

'I am a man that believes everybody should have equal rights.'

'What is important [for me] is to live in a free-society...without barriers to play my role, to follow my religion openly and apply it in my daily life.'

Most of the men noted that they were not acutely aware of differences between women and men in their childhood; some specifically pointing to puberty as the point in time when they noted more restrictions applied to girls' lives and the separation of boys' and girls' worlds:

'Girls didn't have permission from their parents to play with boys...At that time, I found it normal.'

'There was this separate mechanism in the classroom. These tables were for boys; only two-three tables for girls. At high school level, there was a specific waiting room for girls. After classes, all girls from all classes had to meet [there]. Before the class, the girls from each class would go to their classroom with their teacher.'

This separation was later reduced for those men who went to university and for the two older men who, as students, joined a leftist political party where interactions between women and men were encouraged as part of political ideology:

‘When I was in college, ...it was for the first time I could see town and that women were moving, going to market, covered.’

‘After intermediate [school level] I got freedom to mix with lots of people, mostly from political background, so there were lots of people who became my role models... Mostly what I admired [was] that we... consider[ed] a human as a human... These people did not see the difference between women and men; apart from physical things’.

One of the men who only had brothers noted that limited contact with girls in his early life made him rather insecure when interacting with women as an adult. Another man, in contrast, highlighted that he differed from other men around him because he had spent a long time in co-education where he interacted freely with fellow female students. Other men also described how the practice of segregating boys and girls was inconsistent:

‘In my childhood we didn’t think about these issues... We all played together; boys and girls.’

‘Boys and girls [were mixed] even in Holy Qur’an studies.’

‘I’ve had one close female friend since the first grade. She is from a very conservative family.’

The father figure was singled out by the narrators as a highly impactful influence on men’s norms formation. Virtually all men, even those with more conservative views, were aware of and did not approve of violent or strict behaviour by their fathers or other men:

‘My father was very much a hard man. We used to talk very little...he lived far away from us [because of his work as a government official].’

‘I understood my father was different; he never beat us but we saw this with other fathers, beating their children.’

‘My father was a teacher; he was, what can I say, a high tempered person. He used to control everything. When he stayed in the house, nobody could talk loud.’

‘In my family, my father was the only decision-maker’;

‘I do not always agree with my father... the way he sees things in life is very medieval’.

At the same time, the men demonstrated deep respect and even admiration for their father, with the exception of the two men that had experienced absentee fathers and one who had lost his father in his childhood.

‘In some aspects, my father is my role model; not in everything...[he] was not always respectful with my mother. I think he was stressed because of his work [in a bank] and taking care of the family.’

‘My father observed local culture but he was well ahead of his time. He was an influential community member.’

‘When I think about my life, a lot of things that I do are shaped, guided, by my father.’

‘My father was very strict but he had some very good principles. Those I try to follow.’

‘My father was a good person; he worked in madrassa as a muezzin. He had a very soft voice...The main thing I learnt from him was religion. This was his priority...He taught me to be polite with other people and how to be respectful to my wife’.

The men also demonstrated very close ties with their mothers throughout their lives, with the exception of one respondent who expressed frustration with his mother’s ‘submissiveness’ and inability to stand up to her abusive husband, and one whose mother could not look after him due to extreme poverty so he grew up with his older sister:

‘We were afraid of my father but we had a very easy access to my mother.’

‘She was very caring. When I had problems, she always talked to me.’

‘I am very close to my mother.’

The verbally expressed attitudes corresponded with men’s non-verbal communication – the men smiled warmly when talking about their mothers recalling various happy moments. Talking about troubled households of the men’s childhood and their fathers, on the other hand, was accompanied by apparent sadness and struggle to describe their emotions, in particular when referring to violence in the household. The men talked about their father being ‘hard’, ‘strict’, or having ‘his personality’, rather than directly describing violence inflicted on them and other family members.

Other influential figures in the men’s lives included female relatives, specifically older sisters, aunts, step-mothers and in one case a grandmother, whom the men described as ‘kind’, ‘caring’,

‘loving’, ‘giving shelter from beatings’, ‘affectionate’, ‘open to my feelings’, ‘generous’, ‘friendly’, ‘giving’. The two younger men with moderate religious affiliation and an upper class background also referred to female friends and in one case a female colleague described as ‘lively’, ‘jolly’ and ‘a good manager’. One of the NGO workers expressed admiration for his aunt who was a stark contrast to his submissive mother: *‘She used to fight in this male dominated society; [she] had her own strong personality to resist. My mother was too kind and didn’t fight my father’.*

Amongst male figures, the men mentioned teachers (four times), friends (three times), brothers (twice), work colleagues (twice), male community members (twice), political leaders (twice), and the Prophet (once). They were admired for ‘teaching about values’, ‘motivating to do things in life’, ‘sharing common memories’, ‘positive thinking’, ‘helping with studies’, ‘going to cinema’. Education, social media, movies, Bangladeshi writers, and talking to people at tea stalls were also mentioned as significant influences in these men’s lives. These differed based on men’s social background, which is discussed in Section 6.4.2.4.

8.2.2 Patriarchal privilege

The respondents with liberal views were largely aware of their patriarchal privilege. This was evident when the men compared their own life and the lives of their sisters, wives and other women around them. The differences were noted with regards to several aspects, specifically:

1) access to education:

‘We were three brothers and three sisters...Only brothers studied...In my family all three children study.’;

2) mobility and safety in public places:

‘When I think about myself, as a man, I have freedom. My wife does not have that kind of freedom because of society. Whenever she goes somewhere, we are a little bit tense whether she’s safe...I am much safer when I go out than my wife or my sisters’;

3) social and economic opportunities: *‘The life of women I met before [university and the NGO sector] ... is contained in a small world. They discuss shopping, children, family.’*

‘In movies, we can see a lot of social barriers for women, while men can do whatever they want.’

'I still have more opportunities to go out than her [the wife]...There are many reasons. But mostly it is due to the type of work we are doing. My work gives me opportunities to travel in Bangladesh and abroad. My wife's work is in office. She also wants to be more attached to her parents.'

'Of course my wife's and my sisters' lives are different from mine...I decided to come here and I just went. This is not possible for my wife or my sisters. For them it is not safe. They cannot stay by themselves in a hotel. Maybe in a big city but not in a small town...Men lead privileged life...Also in the matters of employment. I wanted to work [abroad], so I did. My wife is taking care of my kid. Even if I wanted to do that, in Bangladesh it is not possible. Paternity leave is like five days.'

4) household work and childcare:

'I want to take tea or gossip with my friends, so I can do it, but she does not have this opportunity because she has to do a lot of work in the house.';

5) ownership of property and savings:

'She [the wife] gave an example of the apartment that I bought: It's in your name; I am not there. Whatever savings you're making, this is under your name. So my perception was that I was doing [it]...because of tax but to her it gives a very different meaning.';

6) awareness of the world beyond immediate surroundings:

'It is difficult for these illiterate women to imagine something different. These women do not get exposure to things outside of their household, village or nearby town.'

Three men differed from the rest. Two poorer men from rural areas appeared largely unaware of their patriarchal privilege:

'There is no difference in our lives; there is maybe difference in what we eat.'

'Women compete with men for jobs; there should be a quota for men and for women.'

The third respondent used his patriarchal religious views to justify discrimination against women: *'Men and women are not the same from the biological point. Man is stronger than woman. Both can be healthy but man is always stronger. Man can go everywhere, woman cannot.'* He further added: *'By nature, men are attracted to women, so women should follow*

strictly the Islamic rules, like wearing an Islamic dress and not work alongside men...It's a huge problem when women leave their houses...I do not think all women want freedom.'

8.2.3 Heteronormativity

Virtually all men, regardless of age and social status, narrated their experience within a heteronormative framework, structured around marriage between woman and man and family as the central unit of the Bangladeshi society. Even more open-minded men who worked in NGOs referred exclusively to heteronormativity when talking about 'gender' relations. Some deviation from the centrality of family in the men's lives was observed in the narrations of the three men with deeper faith, for whom the need to be a 'good Muslim' appeared at least as equal a responsibility as their responsibility to provide for their family. The youngest respondent (student) and two of the NGO workers with rather weak religious affiliation also highlighted knowledge, education and professional fulfilment as other central components in their lives. With respect to homosexuality, the young student noted:

'I don't think [gay men] is a big issue [in Bangladesh]. A lot of people in our society are homosexual but they are not open about it. This is a very far-fetched idea that people would be more accepting towards these men. In a society where people only recently started to be more vocal about violence against women, it is a very far-fetched idea that they would be vocal about gay rights and that gay activities would come out in the society. Even if this is the case, I might not know about gay rights activists and whether people are more accepting towards them. I might not be aware because it is not visible...because of fear.'

8.3 Positioning on women's economic empowerment in private and public spheres

This section analyses the men's narrations from the perspective of six key areas pertaining to both private and public spheres. It identifies the evidence of men's attitudes, behaviour and practices related to the following aspects: 1) family and intimate partnerships; 2) fatherhood and parenting; 3) care and household work; 4) employment and workplace; 5) men's representation in media; and 6) Islamic practice.

8.3.1 Family and intimate partnerships

As noted earlier, the responsibility of man as provider for his family and his close family ties appeared as critical aspects of the men's identities in all but two narrations, as illustrated by the following statements:

'I love to work for my family. I cannot think to be without my family.'

'We feel very deep responsibility over our parents, mother and father.'

'My mother is still alive. I actually went to see a doctor with her this morning...She is now residing in our house.'

Some difference was noted in the narration of one NGO worker who lived with his wife away from the rest of his extended family and who commented on his weaker ties to his parents, in comparison to his wife; and the young unmarried student. The student's life was very closely linked with his family at present, but his future family arrangement was discussed, not in terms of his duty to provide materially for family, but as the goal to build a loving partnership with his future wife that he would choose himself based on his emotions, not his parents' wishes.

With regard to other men, although not directly asked due to the sensitivity of the question, there was some indication of possibly arranged marriage experienced by the men with strong religious affiliation, the oldest men, and two rural men with lowest education. The third man from a rural area was a notable exception – he eloped with his fifteen-year old girlfriend from a higher class family and went into hiding for many years. The man's parents were also known for their so-called 'love marriage' which indicates that parents did not arrange the couple's marriage. The marriage of the man's parents was never accepted by the relatives and this led the narrator's mother to eventually commit suicide. The account of this experience was a deeply emotional point in the man's narration, accompanied by the man's prolonged weeping.

With respect to the narrators' marriage, the quality of that relationship contrasted sharply with the men's parents' generation, where, in most cases, the marriage between a dominant and controlling husband and a submissive wife appeared to be the norm. In general, all twelve men strove, at least to some degree, to establish a respectful relationship with their wives. This included the poorer men, those with less education as well as the most conservative man in the group with a strong patriarchal religious background.

The most progressive men did not just highlight respecting their wives but talked about their loving and collaborative relationships. One of the older narrators notably saddened when talking about situations that may have hurt his wife emotionally: *'Sometimes, I [do] not realise that my acts hurt her [the wife]'*. Another narrator, with a deep affection for his wife and children, highlighted collaborative decision-making: *'The situation has changed. I am with my family but I am not taking all the decisions independently. I take all decisions jointly with my wife, and even with my children'*.

The men, most noticeably the NGO workers, also referred to discussions on various issues with their wives, including about societal issues. As noted throughout the text, some men smiled when recalling moments from a family life or joked jovially about a wife's personal traits indicating a more tranquil environment in these men's families in contrast to the households of their childhood.

Such a positive dynamic was further detected in progressive attitudes about women's opportunities in life, including employment, although in practice only two out of eleven wives of the eleven married men actually had a job; one of those women worked in a gender-segregated female-only environment and another did clerical work in a private bank. The wife of a disabled electrician earned some marginal income thanks to obtaining a tailoring machine following training provided by an NGO. As in other aspects, the youngest unmarried respondent appeared ahead of other narrators in his openness to his future wife's life opportunities. According to him, his partner⁴² would have 'total freedom' to decide about her employment and a career path.

According to most of the husbands, the wives' employment ambitions were curtailed by their responsibility for household and childcare; in two cases the men also mentioned that the wives

⁴² The term used by the respondent.

were not ready to compete in a discriminatory labour market and gave up searching for work early on. According to the childless middle-aged NGO worker, the fact that his wife did not work was the main factor for them in leading a peaceful and happy life, unlike the families where both husband and wife worked which, in his view, were riddled with conflict.

The driver, who married his wife secretly when she was fifteen (he was sixteen at the time), talked about his wife's regret about not completing her studies and not having a job, unlike her educated female relatives. The upper class NGO worker described his dream to establish his own NGO addressing violence against women, where he wished to involve his wife and sister, both of whom had never had a job.

One of the NGO workers further noted gender-stereotypical thinking about women's employment when talking about his family:

'My two sisters are teachers so they leave their homes very often. My other three sisters don't have that kind of freedom because they are not used to going out. They don't know their surroundings...My immediate oldest sister...often comes to the city and travels back to the [village]; she takes part in a lot of meetings...There is still this thinking in Bangladesh – this job is for a woman...Even my sisters think that teaching is the best job for a woman'.

8.3.2 Fatherhood and parenting

Similarly, as in the previous section, all men demonstrated rather different attitudes towards their children, including daughters, than the men's parents. Some gender stereotypes, however, were revealed in the narrations of the two rural poorer men, for whom 'good' marriage of their daughters with a socially acceptable husband with material means was an important social goal to achieve. The first man noted: *'I want to find good husbands for my [twin] daughters. They are sixteen now. I don't have enough money to support them to continue their education. But I am hoping my youngest daughter [twelve years old] will be able to study and get a good government job.'* The second man commented: *'At the birth of my daughter, I planted ten trees to have money for her wedding... Weddings are costly. It is a custom here. We have to save for dowry. Everyone does this here.'* The third man with a disability and from a rural area had no plans for his two and half years old daughter yet.

When the driver with three daughters was asked whether he had talked to his daughters about their plans for the future, he responded negatively and was noticeably surprised about such a

proposition. On the other hand, when he talked about his youngest daughter, in particular her dance and music skills, he beamed with pride and smiled warmly when describing her talents. He later described an ideal husband for his daughters in the following words: to be educated; have a government job; be honest; behave respectfully with his daughter and other people. When asked what he would do, if the future husbands were mistreating his daughters, the driver was noticeably saddened by the thought and expressed his powerlessness under such circumstances.

The second rural man, who worked as a waiter in a distant town, wanted his daughter to have at least some level of education allowing her to find good employment. He also noted that couples now had more freedom to decide for themselves about their marriage. The *madrassa* teacher, who had a daughter of two months, despite his conservative views about women's mobility and employment, also aspired that his daughter would get a good education; first in religious studies and then in 'general' education helping her to get into a medical school to become a doctor.

While only one of the twelve respondents recalled his father spending time with him and playing, eight out of the ten fathers said that they were involved in their children's upbringing in various ways. Lack of such involvement was noted in the narration of one of the older religious disabled men and the poorer man who spent most of his time away from his family due to his job in a town.

The eight fathers highlighted a number of changes in their parenting style in comparison with their own fathers. These were:

1) egalitarian and close emotional interactions with children:

'I didn't like that my father didn't talk to me. But my boys talk to me as if I was their friend. We chat, we go out, we play together...If I was hard on them like my father, what would they think?'

'Comparing to my father, I think I am pretty close to my daughters, very friendly with them.'

'Sometimes they [the children] are directing us, which we never did with our parents. We were scared to do that in our boyhood. Maybe that is because we had a big gap with our fathers. We got very little time from them.'

'They [children] will have feelings [for parents] but they will have their own life.'

2) involvement in children's education and upbringing:

'Yesterday I help them [the children] with studies.'

'My children are getting good guidance. That was totally absent in my life.'

3) openness to children's progressive attitudes:

'[My daughter] doesn't like all this fundamentalist thinking. That may be influenced by me because of my political background...She said that after the university admission, she wanted to learn practical skills. Maybe it's this generation. Her friends, many of them, think like this.'

'My son is in class one. I see how he is different from me when I was a child. He tells me how to behave based on what he learns at school – like, baba, don't use horn, it's not good. His teachers [young women] are his role models. They wear T-shirts. In my childhood, people were not dressing like in my son's school...I hope it'll be better for him; he'll be much better than me.'

4) rejection of child marriage and acceptance of children choosing their own life partner:

'Previously it was something insulting for the family – love marriage. They [young people] are choosing partners, they discuss marriage with their partners. This is good.'

'In some cases, parents are trying to marry their girls when they become adult [get their period]. It's very bad for society. It is because some parents think that they should marry their children at a young age because they think this [marriage proposal] is a good opportunity and there might not be another in future.'

'[My sons] will have more space to choose whom to marry [but] we [present generation] still have this conservative attitude.'

5) open discussion on gender issues:

'I am orienting them [the sons] about [gender] issues in a way acceptable by them. Especially my older boy because he is entering adolescence. I am openly discussing these issues with him.'

6) love of and opportunities for daughters:

'My little, and very beloved, daughter is in class seven.'

'My daughters will get every possibility they can get, compared to my sisters – they didn't get many opportunities.'

‘Even though I say that my parents are a bit old-fashioned, they are not the type of old-fashioned as other people in the society are. They do believe in equal opportunities; they do believe in fundamental principles that are fundamentally right. I believe there wouldn’t be any disparities in terms of facilities that my parents would provide to my sister, being it financial, emotional, be it anything else. In my family, no, there would not be difference.’

7) rejection of violence against women and girls:

‘Society must be educated about sexual harassment. What it actually is. Girls do not have access to the same information as boys get.’

Interestingly, the analysis of the narrations also revealed that the wives and some close female relatives, even those of the most progressive men, may sometimes hold less progressive attitudes than their husbands. The following aspects were discussed by the narrators:

1) restrictions of children’s freedoms such as time to play and to choose their career path:

‘She [the wife] is kind but some rules I don’t like. They are boys, they want to play and enjoy. They will be good men, but now they are boys and they should play. My wife doesn’t like that.’

‘He [the son] wants to be a businessman, but his mum wants her son to be a doctor.’

‘[In my family] the situation is totally reverse. My children fear my wife but feel free with me...Sometimes I am also afraid of my wife [laughter].’

2) restrictions of free interactions between women and men:

‘This mixing of men and women or boys and girls... She [the wife] does not take it positively. This is my failure not having been able to convince her.’

3) fear of children’s independence and relaxed family ties:

‘After marriage, we have some rules around family arrangements and care for parents. But I am trying to explain to my wife: Don’t expect that your son’s wife will cook for you. Because the times will change. He himself will choose his wife. I am preparing her for this change because she is not aware’.

8.3.3 Care and household work

In contrast with the changes in the men's family arrangements and parenting, compared to their parents, the adoption of an equal share in care and household work appeared to be slower in the lives of the narrators. The changes were most evident in the narrations of the young student and seven men from the non-governmental sector. The NGO workers assumed at least some household responsibilities in their current families. There was also an indication of positive impact on older sons of these men: *'My son is also sometimes doing small things like making coffee [for all family members], and verbal commitment to expand a share of household chores.*

The men described the following type of household work they were engaged in:

1) care for children:

'I am involved in taking care of my children. I gave them bath, even after defecation. I take them to school, not always [though]. I help them with schoolwork.'

2) shopping and helping with cooking:

'Mostly what I do is to do with shopping; for vegetables and such things but my wife is doing 100% cooking. I don't know how to cook, actually. I cannot contribute, but I help my wife with peeling onions, and other things. This is not up to the mark yet I would say.'

'Some people say that only women can prepare food for the family; men should not do that task. I do it sometimes, but it's only 5%.'

3) cleaning, washing and dish-washing:

'Common things like cooking and washing dishes...; sometimes washing clothes...but in most cases when I start doing things like dishwashing, she [the wife] says: Stop, stop! I'll do it tomorrow.'

'I sometimes help my wife with cleaning. I've mentioned to you that I don't have much money to keep servants so I help her clean [the apartment]; sometimes I wash my clothes. In Bangladesh you know we have lunch and breakfast at home so I help wash plates and other things. I don't help much, but sometimes I do.'

4) occasional household chores:

'I hang mosquito nets'.

At least in one narration of a middle-aged NGO worker, there was an indication of his wife acting as a gatekeeper, stopping her husband from engagement in household work. This wife also demonstrated dependency on her husband's decision making: *'I mean we are discussing things [but] a final decision is taken by me. ... She is doing some [small things] like buying furniture but in larger things [that] need a larger budget she is not taking risks.'*

Other men, including two older religious men – an NGO worker and the disabled man from a rural area – described how involvement in the household had a positive impact on their relationship with their wives. The NGO worker explained the reasons for helping his wife:

'When I help, she likes it very much. She laughs. I understand her. When I was the youngest in the family, I also helped my mother – to cut fish, cook rice, chop vegetables... This is why I also help my wife... This is a developing country. People are not educated. So if you do something in your house, help your wife, they do not accept it. They say as she is a wife, she should do all these things. This is their thinking. But not all people think like that.'

The rural disabled man was not directly involved in household work but was aware that his engagement in running the household had a positive impact on his relationship with his wife: *'When I go in search of work, she complains that I leave the house. But when I get back, she is happy and asks me lots of questions what to do about different things in the house.'*

As noted earlier, one of the seven men working for NGOs, despite having some open-minded opinions about women's egalitarian opportunities, favoured a gender-stereotypical family model, where he was the primary breadwinner and his wife the homemaker. In his view, this was the right model to follow in order to achieve family happiness.

Consistently, the young student revealed the most progressive attitudes to household work:

'A lot of women in the country, not my friends, but a lot of women out there, they are a lot more oriented to household activities, like cooking, looking after family and children. The social infrastructure in our country actually dictates that women should be inclined towards these activities. They are not able to do anything else, they should at least [know how] to cook, to do those household activities. But I believe this notion of how women should be before and after marriage, to what extent they should pursue education and their careers, is actually changing. This perspective that women should be doing household activities is changing. Among my friends as well'.

With regard his future wife, the student added: *‘As I have told you, whether she [future wife] is good at household things or all those things that society expects from her, these things are secondary to my priorities’*. His views appeared representative of those held by his peers:

‘They [other people] would make fun of me and say a lot of things [about doing household work]. They do even now regarding a lot of choices that I have made...because they do not fit into the characterisation of manhood as defined by society. But that would not affect me. If I am content in what I am doing...their opinions would not matter to me as much...As for my group of friends,... I don’t think they are very different in the way I think. But there are some people that would not agree with me, but I believe most would.’

8.3.4 Employment and workplace gender relations

All narrators other than the youngest student were employed at the time of the research; one of the men was underemployed due to his disability. The most interactions with women in the workplace were experienced by seven men working for NGOs and the driver from a rural area. The *madrassa* teacher limited his interaction with women in the workplace due to his religious convictions. The disabled underemployed man with strong religious affiliation from a rural area expressed concerns that women were taking jobs away from men and proposed gender-segregated quotas regarding employment as a solution. The third man, who was from a rural area, interacted with some female employees in a hotel where he worked. He called them sisters or aunts, depending on their age. He noted that all women working in his hotel were ‘good’ but highlighted that these women lived near the hotel as travelling long distances for employment would not be appropriate for a woman in his view.

The remaining eight men contemplated their experience across a range of aspects related to women’s abilities, and workplace relationships between women and men, including hierarchical and sexual relations. The narrations revealed the following attitudes and practices with respect to:

1) women’s abilities and exposure:

‘Of course I have met a lot of women in my working life in the development sector. I found them friendly and open minded. Their life is much broader than the life of the women I met before.’

'I had three supervisors, one female and two males and they used to ride a motorbike. You know, the female colleague was better than the other two.'

2) women's leadership:

'Quite a few women were a boss in the organisation. With some it was quite comfortable to work, with others there was some hardship...In this country women in leadership have it more difficult than in other countries...Maybe not in NGOs but in other sectors, it can be difficult. Because this is a patriarchal society, men sometimes do not accept women as leaders.'

3) egalitarian workplace interactions:

'I often meet women in my line of work. I have been doing this job for over 25 years. I drive [many] women. I've never experienced any unfair treatment.'

'In every organisation I had female colleagues. In each of these, female colleagues felt freedom and comfort to work with me. I just completed one project [where] I had two female colleagues. They said they were proud to work in the humanitarian team because there is freedom, there is space for thinking, for innovation.'

4) influences on attitudes:

'During my professional life, it has not been a problem to work with women. I was also influenced by my political ideology...That gave me some idea about women's abilities. Not only that. When I started my professional life in an NGO, there I received a lot of training...on gender, empowerment and respect of women.'

'Until an NGO job, I hadn't been thinking there was any problem with that. I was thinking this was our culture. But after entering in an NGO, I got some training and I started thinking about it. Why they [women] sit at a different table than men? Now we sit together. We had a discussion on this. I think that's how it should be.'

5) sexuality and workplace:

'I was always afraid in the past that people around me could see me talking to a girl and they might think something bad about me. I always had that fear. Now I don't care about it.'

'Female colleagues actually want a female friendly environment. I have some male colleagues that are not happy to work with women. I found their eye contact is very negative, and [there are also] sexual tensions.'

‘It depends on a person’s character, personal ideology, personal principles. I have my wife so why would I be looking at you? It should be a basic principle for every man. So I think sexual [innuendos], sexual behaviour, this might discourage female colleagues...Every supervisor, every manager has this basic responsibility to create a [positive] environment for female colleagues.’

‘I try to create a good environment for female colleagues because if any of these female colleagues leave this organisation because of a gender uncomfortable environment or situation, other female colleagues will not be interested to have a job in this organisation’.

The older NGO worker with strong religious affiliation expressed the following view:

‘We should give more opportunities to women as they don’t have them. If we give opportunities to women, they will be able to achieve a lot. They will also inspire other women. Women need to have access; otherwise development is not possible...I never felt discriminated. A few years ago, only men would get opportunities. There is a gap and women should get opportunities to get to the level of men. This is not discrimination.’

This opinion differed starkly from the perspectives of the young *madrassa* teacher who remarked on gender relations in the following statement:

‘I think conditions are applicable for men also. Men should work where women are not present. If men need to work in women’s environment, his eyes should be controlled. I think there is justification for women to stay at home. There is a proverb: prevention is better than cure’...As we are seeing women are not safe, if they go out without a proper Islamic dress, it is better for them to stay at home’.

Once again, the student expressed the most progressive views on women’s employment and gender relations. He offered the following rationale of stereotypical norms’ formation:

‘These opinions, these feelings have existed for generations and generations, before my father. A lot of people from my generation would also be offended if their partner was accomplishing more than them. But I believe, over time, over the last few generations, women have been suppressed, and didn’t do things men did, for example, supporting family financially, buying stuff, going outside, dealing with things as a man would. Women were excluded from these activities. I believe that from these suppressions and practices, my father and my grandfather, and his father seemed to have developed perceptions how women should be and how their

partners should behave, and that they are superior to women in terms of these financial aspects’.

With regards to dealing with violence against women, the student noted:

‘That’s something that I have also noticed that people are actually progressing towards addressing violence against women. In the past, people were less vocal in social media about it, in other media and in person, but I noticed that people are talking about it and that’s a positive sign. These violent acts are not done by men all the time. Women themselves, women from previous generations, believe that women should be doing this and not that. They also contribute to various forms of violence that exist in the society. It’s more about society than men committing violence against women’.

He further commented on the recent societal changes in this statement:

‘A lot of women stepped out of their shoes; a lot of women have shown that women can do the same as men in the society. They stepped out of their shoes and because of that they have, a lot of people have opened their eyes and realised that women are a very important part of the society and they can contribute as much as men can in the society’.

8.3.5 Men’s representation in the media

This section is based on the narrators’ reflections on societal perceptions of contemporary manhood in Bangladesh, including representation of men and women in Bangladeshi media, most frequently referring to film, newspaper and social media. It is crucial to note that less educated and poorer men appeared to have lower analytical skills to reflect on these aspects. In addition, several men contemplated men’s representation in the framework of (global) perceptions of men as Muslims. A specific discussion on the latter subject is presented in the next part.

One of the narrators, the upperclass NGO worker, offered the following view, highlighting changing views on male role models, while noting gender-stereotypical portrayal of women and men in media:

‘Media sell what people will buy. In Bangladeshi cinema, they show a woman as the one that sacrifices, who is always caring for others, loving. She takes care of kids. People see this

message. I don't remember any movies which would show a man cooking for the family and taking care of kids. [But] there is perhaps one good thing. Fifty years ago, a hero had to be tall, strong, handsome. But now a hero can be different. Not only handsome and those other things. Hero can be educated; he is good to women. But I think good men are not only those who are educated. In one situation, a child jumped into water, and it was an ordinary man who tried to save that kid. These ordinary men have contributed most to our country. Most of freedom fighters [from the 1971 war] were poor and less educated men.'

A similar opinion was expressed by another NGO worker, who linked gender stereotypical representations of women and men with a patriarchal social structure in Bangladesh. However, he also underscored that, recently, media have been adopting a more progressive stance on gender relations:

'In our media, we see that men can do whatever they want, but women cannot. In movies we can see a lot of social barriers for women, while men can do whatever they want. They reflect our patriarchal society...Though it is changing, if I compare the last 25 – 30 years ...They [women] were just singing and dancing. Now there are a lot of new movies where a woman has a role.'

The driver pointed to a conflicting Islamic perspective on media: *'The message about men in media today is mixed – some people say that those people we see on TV or in cinema are not practising Islam. Sometimes it's true, but we don't know these people. How can we judge them?'*

The point about conflicting opinions on media was reinforced by a statement from an older religious disabled man who commented that he was not interested in media [TV and cinema] due to their anti-Islamic messages. The migrant waiter from a rural area commented that sometimes men 'did bad things' and sometimes they 'did good things' so he was not sure what to answer. He added: *'Previously men were not very religious. Maybe only forty percent. Now, seventy percent of men are religious. Women cover themselves more, too. That's good.'*

In contrast, the older religious narrator that worked for an NGO noted the critical role of modern communication in bringing about development and transforming Bangladesh into a more progressive society:

'In Bangladesh, some eighty percent of people live in a village and twenty in town, so if we want to see some [positive] changes in [the situation] of women, our rural areas need to change

as well. All technology, internet, mobiles, communication, construction and development. If we have these in village, change would come automatically. In many places there is no good [access to] communication [technologies] and they are excluded from development. So if these barriers are removed, change will happen there gradually as well. If we are not able to bring these things [to rural areas], change will take a long time. [But] if they have [access] to these things, they will catch up with towns.'

One of the older NGO managers also highlighted the positive role of social media in advocating for women's equality experienced in his own family:

'I'd say this is also because of social media. Not television, this type of media. Social media are playing a very good role. My daughter is part of this social media group. It's a social media blog, operated by some progressive women and girls. So she is writing there. This gives her some understanding what a girl's role should be, all this gender imbalance, etc. so she learns from that.'

On the other hand, one of the progressive NGO employees contemplated challenges related to social media from a perspective of a worrying father: *'There are good things online, but also bad things they [children] should not use or look at. I don't know what they are doing. It's a big challenge for our country...If they get interest to look at some bad things, they will not continue with their studies, their learning.'*

The men working for NGOs noted their own potential as public role models, which can encourage other men around them to adopt more progressive attitudes and behaviour. At the same time, some also highlighted their own shortcomings with regards to living up to egalitarian gender norms: *'There are still too many things I need to change... Because I am a human being. I may take many wrong decisions. There should always be some improvement'*.

The young student summarised his stance on men's social representation in the following statement:

'I believe what media try to portray is that men today should be strong, not to have emotional weaknesses. Even if they do, they should not [demonstrate it] greatly. They should have a stable source of income; they should be able to support a family after a certain age. There are a lot of social demands on men. I believe that's what manhood is according to media and society. I believe that this characterisation of men how they should be is not entirely correct because after all differences between women and men are not many, in my opinion. Man should do for

family and society as much as woman. Men should have the same emotional conditions as women. Men should be able to express their emotions openly and as easy as it is easy for women to do so’.

8.3.6 Islamic practice

While the narrators differed in their religious affiliation, the issue of Islam and gender relations emerged rather powerfully in most narrations – seven out of twelve men discussed it directly and another two men mentioned it once in relation to another issue. Predictably, the three men with strong religious affiliation framed their views and their own lives by their faith. However, they also differed significantly in their opinions on how to apply their religious views in their lives and the world around them.

The older disabled man strived to be a ‘good Muslim’ following the tradition of his father, reinforced by his father-in-law, who was also a deeply religious man. This narrator described a good Muslim man as: ‘[Someone that] *behaves good with his wife. If wife faces difficulties, he helps her. He needs to take care of his wife, her clothing, children and the house. This is Islamic teaching.*’ This man did not object to his wife’s economic activities as long as there was sufficient ‘protection’ and the people in her workplace were ‘good’. On the other hand, he was rather critical of increased contacts between women and men outside of their immediate family: ‘*These days, men and women engage in relationships and it is not good, not according to Shari’a... But now it is different. It is bad.*’

Similarly, according to the young *madrassa* teacher, a Muslim man should respect and behave well with his wife and other people. He also rejected violence against women: ‘*Islam does not support violence. If any injustice occurs, Islam has specific rules of punishment...Islam has given importance to women three time more than to men*’. Despite this claim, as noted before, the *madrassa* teacher revealed the most conservative stance regarding women’s mobility, employment, interactions between women and men, and women’s dress code. For instance, he claimed: ‘*Personally, I think a Muslim woman should not work outside [her home]. If there is no way and a woman’s job is important for maintaining a family, then [she] can work. If there is no alternative, a woman can work because Islam supports saving lives*’.

His views on the differences between women and men were strongly influenced by gender stereotypes: ‘*Men and women are not the same from the biological point. Man is stronger than*

woman. Both can be healthy but man is always stronger. Man can go everywhere, woman cannot.' As noted earlier, he also promoted restrictions on women's mobility as a 'solution' to violence against women and was against (Muslim) women's employment where women and men would work alongside as, in his view men were not able to control their sexual urges around women: *'By nature, men are attracted to women, so women should follow strictly the Islamic rules, like wearing an Islamic dress and not work alongside men...It's a huge problem when women leave their houses'*.

These essentialist gender-stereotypical perceptions by the narrator sharply contrasted with the views of the third narrator with strong religious affiliation that worked in an NGO. For this man in his early fifties, his faith gave fundamental guidance in his life and the life of his family but his views were rather progressive:

'This is a Muslim country. Some people from Muslim community say that girls should not be mixing with boys because this will harm religion [Islam]. This is the barrier [that] exists in every district. But things are gradually changing. But it will take time to be like Western countries. They [conservative religious persons] think that boys and girls should be kept separate. But once people start studying in town, they change – there is connection to the Internet and they see.'

The narrator further discussed the importance of maintaining one's 'character', which, in his view, should not be corrupted by social and economic progress, otherwise *'there will not be stability'*. Instead, he advocated *'keeping one's character intact'* and working towards *'peaceful co-existence of Muslims and non-Muslims'*. He further pointed to the importance of involving religious leaders in the transformation of relations between women and men: *'Our religious leaders do not want to keep women separate from men...This has been also changing – the attitudes of religious leaders....slowly and gradually. But it will take time to change the whole system'*.

Amongst the remaining nine men that demonstrated weaker to moderate religious affiliation, four narrators dedicated varying time discussing the issue of religion and women's equality with men. These included the student and three NGO workers. The NGO worker, who distanced himself from religious practice, offered his criticism of conservative interpretation of Islam:

'In terms of Islam, there is a lot of misunderstanding in the society...My wife has a lot of knowledge on this subject. I have maybe two percent of knowledge that she has. And she's

working. She shared a lot of things with me. The interpretation of Islam is done by people who are not well educated so there is a lot of misinterpretation’.

In his view, the misinterpretation was, among other aspects, linked to the proliferation of *madrassas* in Bangladesh:

‘To some extent I agree there are more hardliners in Bangladesh because there are a lot of madrassas. Many have been established in the last twenty years and this is worrying...I have a friend who studied there and the education system is not scientific. They just memorise things but there is no culture to make them grow and explore the world and gain critical thinking...People who have money, politicians also, when they want to gain votes before elections, they construct a madrassa instead of...progressive educational institutions. That’s why so many madrassas have been constructed in the last two-three decades.

In contrast to the *madrassa* teacher, who claimed that people who received religious education *‘would not do anything bad’*, the two NGO workers alleged a number of crimes that had been occurring in *madrassas* and noted that it had been only very recently that people started to talk about these issues publicly. One notable case was the 2019 murder of a female *madrassa* student who was set on fire by a group of fanatics instructed by a *madrassa* teacher in an attempt to stop the student from reporting sexual harassment. One of the narrators commented on the case in the following statement:

‘There were huge protests everywhere...This is just one of such incidents but there are many. Much more information about this behaviour is coming out. This was shocking news for everyone. This really shook us. What is going on in these madrassas? Really bad things. There is a big problem that there are political connections with madrassas’.

Another narrator made a point about the case, highlighting the complexity of the root causes:

‘It was not only a crime against a woman. It was tactical – a picture and also dynamics in society, power relations, politics, social issues and also other issues...Unfortunately this girl was targeted because she raised her voice against this cartel.... It was done by [people] who do not carry the essence of religious values. It’s kind of perversion of society as a whole’.

The third NGO worker also questioned the value of education obtained in *madrassas*: *‘In madrassas what exposure to real life, arts and to women do these boys get? I remember ... when these boys came to university. They were taking pictures in front of statues. They were not familiar with a woman’s body. For them it was something strange’.*

One of the narrators further alleged another hidden crime – rape of boys by male teachers in rural areas:

‘Many male children are violated by their teachers in villages. Mostly in religious informal institutions... These are very informal types of school...These are basically religious leaders in that community. It’s a long history...There are a lot of allegations against them...They do not have any values, even if they are preaching them; it’s more like a [routine]... They are preaching [about these values] but doing these crimes...Homosexuality is completely restricted by Islam.’

He further noted: *‘This is kind of perversion and this interpretation of religious norms and rules...somehow...[is] dividing us into two group – I can do everything because I have the privilege to do all things but we are suppressing women and preaching to them how to behave. This contradiction is prevailing in our society, in Muslim communities’.*

The young student, who considered himself a practicing Muslim, distanced himself from conservative interpretations of Islam. He presented the following perspective as the way to overcome the opposing views in the Bangladeshi society:

‘I think that this conservative interpretation of Islam is more prevalent outside the city. For example, extreme followers of Islam believe that women should not pursue education, women should not be as open-minded as they are. Those kinds of people are actually outside the city, less in Dhaka. I think even if these views are on rise, they have been present in this country for a long time, to be honest. I don’t know whether they are on rise, but if they were, it is not very noticeable. ... People have different views on covering women and keeping them inside is better for them. A lot of women out there actually agree with these things – that they should be covered because their religion says so. And then there is another group of people who think the exact opposite. I believe that both are actually right in their own perspectives because one follows their religion and others are more open-minded and want more things out of life. I believe that these opinions exist, but they should come to some common ground because these differences give rise to all sorts of conflicts, in social media, in physical conflicts... These differences, they exist because they are forced to exist. These differences, I believe should not exist.’

He further added: *‘Religion and the way we live should be about choice, not to be imposed. If you are religious and I am not, that’s okay. This message should be out here. These are fundamental principles that every human being should hold.’*

8.4 Variables and contextual divergence

This sub-section summarises the divergence identified in the men's narrations by applying five variables that were also applied in Instruments 1-3. These included: 1) age; 2) rural-urban continuum; 3) religious affiliation; 4) socio-economic status; and 5) disability. The evidence of differences in attitudes, norms and lived practice was identified based on the discussion of the main themes (manhood; early influences on norms formation; patriarchal privilege; family and intimate partnerships; fatherhood and parenting; care and household work; employment and workplace; men's representation in media; Islamic practice). The variables were cross-tabulated to determine possible correlations. By doing so, the section also offers insights into the narrators' standpoints with regards to recent social transformations in Bangladesh. Additionally, it is crucial to underscore that there are many factors that may have impacted the narrators' standpoint formation throughout their lifetime, many of which were not uncovered in this research. The aim of this section is not to provide a comprehensive analysis of the factors at play, but rather to point to the complexity of men's individual experience in manhood formation and to identify some common trends.

1) *Age-related differences*

Predictably, the youngest respondent, the student from Dhaka, consistently demonstrated progressive standpoints across all themes explored through life history narrations. However, another narrator, the Dhaka *madrassa* teacher, just three years older than the student, exemplified a very different image of the contemporary youth – one that opposes current progressive changes in Bangladesh, including women's economic empowerment. Moreover, the adherence to progressive attitudes and their practice was not exclusive to the responses of the young student. Out of the seven men in their thirties and forties, five largely held anti-patriarchal views backed by many examples of progressive practice. Out of three men in their fifties, two can be considered progressive in their standpoints. Hence, it appears, with regards to the men in this group, age was not a conclusive factor in the men's progressiveness or, conversely, conservatism.

2) *Rural-urban continuum*

As all narrators moved their residence at some point in their lives, their residence was determined based on the residence where each man spent most of his time. Out of twelve men, eight men who had resided mostly in urban areas throughout their lifetime, specifically in Dhaka city and Chattogram, largely held progressive views on women's economic

empowerment, despite the fact that virtually all, but one, were born and spent their childhood in rural areas. All three men from rural areas held rather patriarchal views, with some marginal variations in their responses. The man that resided in a peripheral zone of Dhaka demonstrated the strongest patriarchal attitudes reflected also in his life choices and practice.

3) Religious affiliation

Religious affiliation of the narrators was determined by the author through personal accounts of the men's faith (Islam) and the role it had played in their lives. Based on this analysis, the group of twelve narrators included three men with strong religious affiliation, five with moderate religious affiliation and four with weak religious affiliation. Out of three men with strong religious affiliation, one narrator demonstrated a rather egalitarian understanding of gender relations; one leaned towards patriarchal standpoints; and the third one appeared the most conservative in the entire group of twelve narrators. Out of five men with moderate religious affiliation, three held rather egalitarian views, and all four men with weak religious affiliation consistently demonstrated progressiveness. Hence, no clear correlation between religious affiliation and patriarchal viewpoints and practice was detected in this group of narrators, although all four men with weaker religious affiliation were more progressive.

4) Socio-economic status

The socio-economic status of the narrators was assigned through the combined indicator – education and employment background – which was also an indication of the men's wealth rank. In that regard, the two upper income men with higher levels of education consistently held strong progressive views across all themes explored in the life history narrations. With respect to the six men from middle income strata, all had at least a university degree and were also largely progressive with some divergence indicated in the narration of one man that worked for an NGO. Out of these eight men, seven worked for NGOs and one was a student at the time of the research. The membership of two men in a leftist political party was correlated with their rather progressive views. The eight men went out of their way to assume a proactive role in promoting women's equality with men, whether in their own families, in the workplace or in other public spaces. On the contrary, all four men with the lowest income and with either primary or secondary education, that to a large extent involved religious education gained in a rural area, held much stronger patriarchal views, reflected also in their private lives. It can thus be concluded that the men's higher, and presumably better quality, education was a positive

factor in impacting the narrators' progressiveness, reinforced by interactions within open-minded public institutions.

5) *Disability*

The analysis further examined whether there is any correlation between disability and viewpoints held by the narrators. The group of twelve men included two men with disability – one with a visual impairment and one with a hearing impairment. Both these men demonstrated strong to somewhat strong conservative views on gender relations, reflected also in their daily practices. However, proposing any conclusions at this point would be premature and cross-tabulation with other variables is required.

6) *Qualitative multivariate analysis*

Several conclusions can be made from the cross-tabulation of five variables. Firstly, there was no clear indication that being younger is correlated with progressiveness. Liberal views were consistently present in the narrations of older men as well, including those over fifty years of age. The progressiveness of the young student appeared to be reinforced by his higher socio-economic status, urban residence and moderate religious affiliation. With regards to the second young man, the *madrassa* teacher, his patriarchal attitudes were correlated with his lower socio-economic status, strong religious affiliation, residence in a peripheral urban zone with challenging living conditions, and his disability.

It is crucial to note that the teacher's entire narration was framed by his disability status and hardship that he had to endure in his life as a result. In addition to narrating in great detail what had caused his disability, he repeatedly returned to the issue of his disability even while talking about different aspects of this life. The teacher appeared particularly frustrated by challenges to obtaining a better education due to his disability, despite being a good student. Despite his apparent patriarchal standpoints, he demonstrated rather liberal expectations about his daughter's future (higher education, middle-class employment) and some views regarding his faith were consistent with a progressive interpretation of Islamic norms.

Stronger and moderate religious affiliation was not automatically correlated with conservative views and practices; on the contrary, one of the NGO workers, who framed his life by his deep religious values, appeared to be one of the strongest advocates of women's equal opportunities. His stance was correlated with his higher education, middle income status and urban residence. His liberal views also appeared to be influenced by his childhood experience, in particular a problematic father figure and a loving mother. Progressive views were also held by those men

that, as children, received extensive religious education but later in life were exposed to other experiences, in particular higher education, moving to urban areas and finding employment in a socially open-minded institution, as was the case of the older men. The patriarchal views of the rural disabled man with strong religious affiliation were correlated with his lower education, lower and insecure income and rural residence. Similarly, as the disabled teacher, he too expressed that his life experience had been significantly altered by his disability, which as he noted, resulted in the 'loss of joy in life'. His manhood appeared emasculated due to his inability to provide for his family exacerbated by the expectations from his wealthier family-in-law.

In addition, the men's employment in the non-governmental sector, and influence of egalitarian leftist ideologies, appeared to be strong factors influencing the narrators' views and practice. All seven men that were employed in NGOs during the research, regardless of their age, religious affiliation or position held, demonstrated largely progressive views. Some of these narrators specifically underscored that joining an NGO was a crucial point of change in their attitudes on women's equality with men.

It should be noted that progressive ideas were not always consistently applied in their own life, in particular with regards to engagement in household work and care, which may have been a factor in the low employment rate of the men's wives. Moreover, one of the NGO workers demonstrated some noticeable discrepancy in his narration – while overall this narrator held progressive views, reinforced by his political affiliation, in his household arrangement, he opted for a gender stereotypical set-up with him as the breadwinner and his wife as the homemaker, which in his opinion was the guarantee of their marital happiness. This choice was interesting especially as the couple had no children. In addition, even the progressive men revealed some deeply rooted gender stereotypes, for example, when describing the qualities for which they admired women in their lives. Their own primary breadwinner roles also demonstrated complicity in maintaining patriarchal masculinities.

In summary, it appears higher (better quality) education, affiliation with a progressive employer and other progressive institutions, and urban residence were consistently correlated with the narrators' progressiveness; while rural residence, lower education and lower socio-economic status were consistently associated with largely patriarchal values and practices. Moreover, being younger was not a guarantee of progressiveness, while religious upbringing and stronger religious affiliation did not appear to be an automatic precursor of the men's

adherence to patriarchal attitudes and practices. Disability may be a hidden driver of the conservatism of the two disabled men, if it hindered their opportunities in accessing better education, employment, interaction within open-minded institutions, and also mobility to a more affluent and socially stimulating urban area.

The multivariate analysis underscored the significance of examining an interplay of diverse factors in determining the level of men's progressiveness or conservatism. It also indicated that a certain 'right' combination of factors might be needed to enhance men's adherence to progressive gender norms. Still, the application of progressive attitudes in practice, whether in private and public spheres, may lag behind, as exemplified by some narrations. In addition, at least three NGO workers commented on examples of negative attitudes towards women by other male colleagues in their organisations, so the progressiveness of these specific narrators should not be automatically extended to all male NGO workers. Despite the prevalence of conservative viewpoints amongst the less educated rural men and the conservative religious men, the narrations revealed several examples indicating at least some hints of progressiveness. These included: the desire to have respectful relationships with wives; love of daughters; expanded ambitions in educating daughters; some openness towards women's earning income; and rejection of violence against women and children.

8.5 Key findings from the analysis of the construction of Muslim masculinities

The twelve life-history narrators demonstrated varied experiences with respect to the formation of their manhood, including their attitudes, norms and practices related to women's economic empowerment (WEE). There was no evidence of one specific hegemonic masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005) that could be applicable to all narrators, however, some common elements were identified. These could be attributed to both patriarchal masculinities as well as those supporting more progressive standpoints concerning WEE.

One of the specific aspects shared by all narrators was the situatedness of their narrations within compulsory heteronormativity. All but one narration involved gender binary of opposite femininity and masculinity (MacCormack and Strathern, 1980; Irigaray, 1985; Whatling, 1997), with a male primary income earner responsible for providing for his family. The key breadwinner role was complemented by other vital male roles (as identified in the narrations), including the following: father, husband, Muslim believer, employee, learner committed to his personal development, citizen, political activist. Each narrator assumed a varied combination of these roles in his life.

The narrators' primary breadwinning role corresponded with the prominence of a husband's career over his wife's, including in the case of three men whose wives also earned income. In total, eight wives out of eleven were not engaged in any paid employment. A primary breadwinner role, husband's career preference, and domination of masculinity over femininity were specifically rejected only by one narrator, the youngest man in the group in his early twenties.

A number of reasons were provided by the eight men whose wives did not work. These included: 1) a wife's primary responsibility over care and household work; 2) competition in the labour market and not making enough effort to overcome it; and 3) a wife's reproductive responsibilities and a husband's income provision role as a guarantee of marital happiness. Such reasoning revealed both male patriarchal privilege as well as female patriarchal bargain (Kandiyoti, 1988; Connell, 2005; Pease, 2006, 2014). It is worth noting that this group included six university graduates.

Another common aspect in the narrations of all men was a notable difference between the narrators' family arrangements (including the student's future family) and those of the men's parents. Specifically, all men appeared to maintain (or planned to maintain) better quality relationships with their wives, including respect, care and even love between spouses; even in

those marriages that could have been arranged. However, the more progressive men appeared to have a higher quality marriage and seemed happier than the men with more conservative views. In addition, all men, including the most conservative men in the group, rejected violent behaviour of their fathers that was apparently present in their birth families.

The narrators also demonstrated a rather different parenting style in comparison with their own fathers, including their relationship with daughters, although some controlling behaviour was still evident in the narrations of the more conservative men. This concerned particularly restrictions of women's mobility, their social relations as well as life choices, including selecting daughters' employment, limiting daughters' education, and choosing daughters' life partners.

Positive changes in parenting were most evident in the narrations of the most progressive men and involved a loving relationship, even admiration of daughters, and commitment to give daughters 'every opportunity'. However, even the conservative men had some plans for their daughters that involved education and employment, although daughters had (would have) less say in these matters.

The narrators' fatherhood appeared to involve much stronger emotional connections and much more frequent interactions with children, unlike their own fathers, evident particularly in the narrations of the most progressive men. These men largely held egalitarian attitudes when it came to the lives led by their children (boys and girls). This 'new' type of fatherhood included: 1) close emotional interactions with children; 2) involvement in children's education and upbringing; 3) openness to children's progressive attitudes; 4) rejection of child marriage and acceptance of children choosing their own life partner; 5) open discussion on gender issues; 6) love of and opportunities for daughters; 7) rejection of violence against women and girls.

As noted, the narrators were conflicted about their own fathers perceived as an ambiguous figure. While there was some admiration of the fathers' accomplishments in the public domain (education, employment, community affairs, religiosity), all but one narrator were also critical of their fathers' behaviour and demeanour in the privacy of their household, where the men's fathers were perceived as emotionally distant and often violent 'dictators' feared by other family members. While there was some difference in the narrations by two upper class narrators, their fathers' behaviour was still perceived as too strict, unkind and old-fashioned (in terms of views on women's equality with men). Such behaviour by the narrators' fathers opposed Islamic masculine traits promoting kindness and care in household (Kabasakal Arat

and Hasan, 2017), while the narrators' own behaviour in their families (student's future family) was in line with these characteristics.

On the contrary, all narrators had rather deep positive emotions for their mothers, with the exception of one narrator who was critical of his mother's submissiveness and her inability to resist his controlling father. Patriarchal bargain by the narrators' mothers was, however, a common feature. In the men's narrations, these women complied with patriarchal gender division of labour and gender stereotypical behaviours of a culturally intelligible submissive self-sacrificing female (Butler, 2007; Brickell and Chant, 2010).

At least some men were also able to identify some exceptions to these stereotypical female representations, including an outspoken aunt that resisted patriarchal arrangements in her family; a grandmother that her grandson could talk to openly; a female friend that carefully selected her future husband; university female students and female members of a political party interested in public affairs and planning their own careers. These examples were identified by the eight largely progressive narrators, while the four narrators with more conservative views struggled to name influential women in their lives, besides their mother (or a mother's substitute).

In contrast to the women in the narrators' early life, virtually all male figures they identified as their role models were admired for their cognitive abilities and instructive roles, unlike the qualities highlighted with respect to the female figures. These perceptions revealed the narrators' deeply rooted compliance with the gender binary system with femininities being associated with nurturing roles, while relating masculinities with intellectual qualities (MacCormack and Strathern, 1980; Irigaray, 1985).

The narrators' wives largely appeared to perform similar gender stereotypical roles to the narrators' mothers, although the narrators' perspectives on maintaining personal and structural patriarchal systems had evolved. Some of the wives appeared even more conservative, at least in some aspects, than their husbands. This was manifested, for example, in the wives: 1) restricting children's freedoms such as time to play; 2) controlling children's career paths; 3) limiting children's free interactions with the opposite sex; and 4) fearing children's independence and relaxed family ties.

Still, while the narrators' own families largely followed a gender-stereotypical family model (a husband as the primary breadwinner and his wife as the homemaker), the progressive narrators (and their wives, too) appeared to approve of a more-egalitarian family model of two

income earners in the future families of their children. This was not only applicable to the progressive narrators, but, at least to some extent, to those with more conservative views as well, including the most conservative *madrassa* teacher, who planned for his daughter to become a doctor.

The older childless narrator, for whom his patriarchal male breadwinner family model was the strategy to achieve marital happiness, can serve as an example of maintaining male patriarchal privilege as part of his private patriarchy (Connell, 2005; Pease, 2006, 2014), while supporting women's social and economic inclusion within his employment at an NGO, referred to as Minow's paradox (Pease, 2006). It would have been interesting to explore the wife's life satisfaction considering psychological, social and economic dimensions of WEE discussed in Section 5.2, particularly given the absence of children in this marriage.

Furthermore, the narrations revealed complex pathways of the narrators' socialisation into gender norms (De Beauvoir, 1949; Butler, 2007). In addition to the narrators' experience in their birth families, the narrators also discussed diverse experiences within the Bangladeshi educational system, personal social circles as well as in employment. The more conservative men tended to avoid the subject of their relations with girls and women within these domains.

The more progressive men, in contrast, narrated in detail various encounters with women. These narrations included reflections on the narrator's male privilege. While some of the men referred to puberty as the point in time when their lives started to be markedly different from those of girls, the highly educated men referred to their university studies as an important period of 'awakening' to the problem of inequalities between women and men. The narrators portrayed university as a particularly socially progressive institution conducive to men-women interactions, in addition to political parties and non-governmental organisations. The narrators also linked their participation in these institutions with their urban (re-)location, perceiving town/city as more socially open spaces.

The narrators' patriarchal privilege was particularly acute in the men's reflection on their own lives and those led by their sisters and wives. As noted, the acknowledgement of male patriarchal privilege was, however, specific to the more educated men. Three less educated men with conservative views were not aware or directly refused to acknowledge such privilege (they were directly asked), while one of the conservative men expressed his guilt over his wife's unfulfilled ambitions in education and employment due to their early marriage. This was the

narrator with the least conservative views among the four conservative men, who was in a loving marital relationship and also expressed caring emotions for his daughters.

The progressive narrators related their male privilege, in comparison to the women in their lives, to the following areas: 1) access to education; 2) no mobility restrictions; 3) social and economic opportunities; 4) no/limited responsibility for household work and childcare; 5) ownership of property and savings; 6) awareness of the world beyond immediate surroundings.

The narrations further provided evidence of the narrators' involvement in reproductive tasks, including: 1) care for children; 2) shopping and helping with cooking; 3) cleaning, washing and dish-washing; 4) occasional household chores and household management. Such involvement was much more pronounced in the narrations of the more progressive men, while those with less progressive views did not spend much time discussing this issue.

The progressive narrators' care activities were facilitated by a 'new' type of involved fatherhood. These men acknowledged that their engagement in reproductive work fell short of needs and demonstrated commitment to increase their share in future. The involvement in reproductive activities, including the experience of two older men with strong religious backgrounds, was reflected in the improvement of men's relationships with their wives. This was correlated with the findings of the focus group discussions (Instrument 1 and 2) and the peer-to-peer survey (Instrument 3).

The young student stood out amongst the narrators with respect to his (future) engagement in reproductive responsibilities – he rejected patriarchal gender division of labour and expected that in his future household, task division would be based on equality, interests and a mutual agreement between him and his wife. The second upper class narrator pointed to his lack of freedom to challenge his primary breadwinner role in the current situation in Bangladesh and the impossibility to spend more time with his young son due to difficulties his wife would face in finding adequately paid employment, while also noting lack of adequate provision for paternal leave in Bangladesh.

The narrations regarding the men's interactions with women in the workplace exposed a range of men's attitudes to working women. While three more conservative men, including two religious men, advocated restricted interactions between women and men in the workplace, even to the point of women's seclusion within women-only work environments, the least conservative man in the group of four men with less progressive attitudes, and the university graduates, presented many positive experiences in mixed workplaces.

The progressive narrators acknowledged women's abilities and leadership skills and promoted egalitarian workplace interactions. The narrations further highlighted the positive impact of NGOs on the formations of egalitarian practices by men in their workplace. An older religious NGO worker was particularly outspoken about involving women in paid employment. All seven NGO narrators in the group held rather progressive views, despite differences in age and rank.

A substantial part of the narrations on workplace gender relations was devoted to (hetero)sexual relations in the workplace; with the progressive men acknowledging sexual harassment against women by men (even in NGOs) and their own role in stopping it. On the other hand, the most conservative man in the group, the *madrassa* teacher, justified his views on workplace restrictions by a patriarchal perception of human sexuality, in which women's sexualised bodies must be disciplined as men, driven by their sexual urges, want to enjoy those bodies (Rubin, 1984; Bartky, 1988; Butler, 2007; Hughes, 2017). Contrary to the teacher's claim, sexual relations, he described, were not a biological given, but were constructed through patriarchal power relations (Foucault, 1978; Kandiyoti, 1988; Chowdhury, 2009).

The more progressive narrators recognised a possibility of sexualised relations in a mixed workplace, however, they shifted the problem of dealing with it to men – sexual tensions could be reduced by policing men's behaviour towards women, rather than restricting women's lives, as was proposed by the *madrassa* teacher and other conservative narrators. On the other hand, such women's 'protection' from men by men still carried some remnants of male patriarchal guardianship that correlates with protectionist, conservative, reading of the Qur'an (Kabasakal Arat and Hasan, 2017; Muawah, 2018).

With respect to men's public representation in the media, the narrations pointed to changing views on male role models portrayed in local media in the recent years, but also noted prevalent gender stereotypes about femininities and masculinities, reflecting existing patriarchal social structures in Bangladesh.

The reflections of the religious narrators demonstrated conflicting perspectives on the role of the media. The conservative men with strong religious backgrounds spoke against the media, while the older NGO worker with a strong religious background highlighted a critical role of modern communication means in stimulating transformation of Bangladesh to become a socially and economically progressive society. Social media were also acknowledged by

another older man for their positive role in advocating for women's equality with men, as experienced in his own family.

As already indicated, there were substantial differences in the narrators' Islamic practice and attitudes to faith. The narrators with strong religious beliefs represented two opposing sides: the older NGO worker represented progressive interpretations of Islamic norms, while the *madrassa* teacher and another older man from a rural area represented conservative interpretations.

The men with moderate affiliation, similarly, included the men with rather progressive attitudes and those leaning towards patriarchal norms. The latter group involved rural less educated men, while moderate men were all university graduates residing in urban areas. Several of these men, in addition to those with weak religious affiliation, expressed rather critical views on *madrassas*, including allegations of supporting violence against girls and boys, in addition to poorer quality education that also restricted male students in understanding the world around them. Several narrators also pointed to a gradual awakening by the general public in Bangladesh to challenges associated with religious institutions, while two narrators with religious affiliation, conveyed the message of religious tolerance and rejection of imposing conservative values on fellow citizens.

With respect to the multivariate analysis, age was not a conclusive precursor in the men's progressive attitudes as these were expressed by the men in their 20s-50s. Equally inconclusive was the men's religious background as there were examples of men with stronger and moderate religious experience that were also rather progressive. There was much stronger evidence of the positive correlation between the men's urban residence and their adherence to progressive social and gender norms. Similarly, a higher social status associated with university education and a white-collar job was consistently correlated with the men's progressive views, although it should be remembered that seven out of eight of these men worked for non-governmental organisations. Two men with disabilities demonstrated rather conservative attitudes correlated with their lower social status and apparent emasculation due to reduced capacity to fulfil a primary breadwinner role and, at least in the case of the *madrassa* teacher, an unfulfilled potential.

The narrations highlighted the significance of considering intersecting factors potentially impacting masculinities. For instance, disability can lead to men's lack of opportunities to be exposed to other value systems, and thus can be a hidden driver of conservatism. The

progressiveness of the men in their 30s-50s appeared to be driven by their higher education, urban middle/upper class lifestyles and their employment at an NGO. Equally, religious affiliation in combination with higher education did not lead to conservative gender attitudes. It is, however, worth noting that the multivariate analysis focused only on a small set of variables; there could have been other salient factors impacting the narrators' norm formation, which were not explored by this research.

Certain institutions with progressive normative frameworks were positively correlated with the promotion of egalitarian gender norms in the narrators' lives. These included: universities, non-governmental organisations, social media and political parties (adhering to a progressive social ideology). On the other hand, traditional media (radio, television, cinema) and family appeared to be a conflicting space with respect to gender norms. Religious schools, *madrassas*, and certain interpretations of Qur'anic guidance were perceived counterproductive to promotion of WEE and gender equality more broadly. On the contrary, egalitarian interpretations of Islamic norms appeared to be conducive to WEE. In addition, while the conservative men expressed some apprehension about transformation of social and gender relations in Bangladesh, the progressive men were rather optimistic about living in a more egalitarian society.

The narrators occupied different positions in the masculinity continuum (Antagonists, Allies, Advocates), with the larger concentration of the respondents apparently adhering to Ally-Advocate masculinities, likely caused by positive bias towards non-governmental employees. While these men appeared to resist patriarchy, it must be also noted, that they were shielded by their privileged positions to do so – thanks to their membership in the middle-upper class and their employment valuing egalitarian gender norms. The most progressive narrator in the group was the youngest respondent, the upper-class student, that consistently presented progressive views that could be comparable to opinions of young men in the most progressive developed countries, reflective of globalised standpoints on gender equality. The opposite end of the range was occupied by the young *madrassa* teacher, although he, too, revealed some progressive attitudes, particularly with respect to his fatherhood and rejection of violence.

Chapter 9 Men and Development Strategies on Women's Economic Empowerment

9.1 Introduction

Chapter 9 concludes the empirical exploration of masculinities' positioning towards women's economic empowerment (WEE) with the focus on development discourses. The findings draw on two main sources: Instrument 4 (Construction of manhood) and Instrument 5 (Men's interpretations of WEE strategies) targeting Bangladeshi Muslim men in positions of power at non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Chapter 9 analyses masculinities within the public sphere (development policy and practice) and the public roles of men. These roles are closely intertwined with men's positioning within private and public patriarchy. This chapter responds to the third research sub-question and contributes to the identification of policy implications of the research with respect to masculinity-informed WEE and women's economic rights.

Section 9.2 discusses men's interpretation of development strategies on WEE carried out by three development NGOs from the perspective of five senior male managers. The aim was not to conduct a comprehensive gender audit of policies, practices and programmes on WEE within three organisational programmes. Instead, the focus was on the identification how these approaches to WEE were viewed, understood and promoted by senior male managers in positions of influence over the particular nature of WEE strategies in their respective organisations. Methodologically, the data drew on structured interviews with five senior male managers from three NGOs. A review of selected organisational policies, programme documents and other secondary sources was also conducted to provide background information and context. The subsequent Section 9.3 presents men's perspectives on the prospects of gender equality between women and men in Bangladesh. The section draws on life history narrations (Instrument 4) with eight men from five NGOs and one student. The responses by the student were added due to their close correlation with those by NGO workers and their relevance for the analysis of progressive masculinities. The final section of Chapter 9, Section 9.4, presents the discussion of key findings and concludes the presentation of the empirical research results.

9.2 Men's interpretations of development strategies on women's economic empowerment

In total, five male senior managers representing three NGOs participated in data collection conducted in August and September 2019. Four NGOs were originally approached to participate in the analysis, however, one was later dropped due to non-availability of relevant staff for an interview during data collection. The three organisations, that participated in the analysis, included two international NGOs (INGOs). For one INGO, economic empowerment and poverty reduction is central to its programme, while the other promotes rights of people with disabilities, including their economic empowerment. All three organisations had established cooperation through funding from UK Aid. All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed and submitted for verification by the participants. Three managers responded, with one providing corrections to the text and the second accepting the transcribed version. Table 9.1 provides a brief profile of each organisation. The references to the managers and organisations are anonymised.

Table 9.1: Profiles of three non-governmental organisations – Instrument 5

Organisation (year of starting operation in Bangladesh)	Key technical areas	Outreach (divisions)	Number of full- time staff; senior management team, and economic inclusion staff in 2019	Estimated budget of economic inclusion programme in 2019 (EUR)
INGO A (1997)	- Inclusive livelihoods and education - Inclusive health & prevention of disabilities - Rights promotion of people with disabilities - Humanitarian response & DRR	Dhaka Chattogram Rangpur	Overall: 250 Female: 60 Male: 190 Management: 27 Female: 6 Male: 21 Economic inclusion: 25 Female: 6 Male: 19	1.20 million
INGO B (2000)	- Skills development & education (incl. vocational skills) - Sustainable and inclusive economies (agriculture & nutrition; market system development) - Governance and peace	Dhaka Chattogram Khulna Rajshahi Rangpur Sylhet	Overall: 89 Female: 22 Male: 67 Management: 36 Female: 11 Male: 25 Economic inclusion: 22 Female: 5 Male: 7	3.43 million

	- Environment and climate change - Water and infrastructure			
NNGO (1985)	- Social development (health, education, human rights & governance, climate change, environment and disaster management) - Economic development (inclusive finance, microfinance, microenterprise, women's enterprises)	Chattogram	Overall: 1098 Female: 442 Male: 656 Management: 58 Female: 21 Male: 37 Economic inclusion: 475 Female: 166 Male: 309	2.95 million

The interviews with male development workers focused on men's understanding of five key themes: 1) the concept of WEE; 2) barriers to WEE; 3) employment facilitated by organisations; 4) measuring WEE; 5) funding for WEE; and 5) gender equality in organisational culture.

1) *The concept of women's economic empowerment*

The analysis first sought to examine men's understanding of WEE as a *transformative* concept. Based on the interviews, none of the senior managers could propose a clearly outlined definition of WEE that their organisation applied. Instead, the managers refer to 'intuitive' understanding of WEE. Two INGO A senior managers noted an economic empowerment framework proposed by Kabeer (2009) that was applied in a UK Aid funded project (2018-2021) championed by a senior female manager⁴³ who had led the programme design. They described the framework included several measurable dimensions, namely: 1) building women's human capital and capabilities; 2) redistributing reproductive responsibilities through labour saving technologies, 3) care facilities and strengthening the caring role of fathers; 4) ensuring women's equal property rights; 5) mainstreaming women into the financial system; and 6) promoting social protection in times of crisis. At the time of the interview, one of the INGO A managers was also working on a gender action plan consisting of actions for each

⁴³ This refers to the author.

dimension of the Kabeer's framework and linked the results of the gender analysis with a design of household business plans.

According to the INGO B senior manager, his organisation followed a Market System Development (MSD) approach to poverty reduction and inclusive economic development, part of which was to carry out Participatory Gender Analysis to understand gender-related barriers in market-related activities of the poor leading to a multi-level gender action plan. WEE was interpreted as access to income and control of productive assets by women, while simultaneously enhancing women's agency and their voice in decision-making at household level and through women's participation in networks at local level. As in INGO A, the INGO B's manager highlighted the importance of allocating quotas for women in target groups. The manager further explained an organisational community mobilisation approach:

'Our strategy depends on where we're working. [In] the design of activities and the approach, we [follow] our standard approach, but we customise it. We mainstream gender in our activities, but where women's mobilisation is restricted, we try to encourage women's participation in a way that the decision comes from community. They must agree with women's mobilisation. It has a degree of advancement but it does not necessarily mean that we are imposing the decision on the community. [Our organisation], in all projects, relies on a community decision process. So we encourage community to take a decision and then we try to [adapt] our strategy in line with that decision.' (MSD Project Manager, INGO B)

NNGO's senior manager noted that he saw his organisation as "a facilitator in the process of poverty eradication and establishment of rights"⁴⁴. The concept of WEE was included in the organisational strategic documents as part of the Economic Empowerment thematic area, whereas Gender Policy (2016) defined the concepts of gender equality and gender mainstreaming. Promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment was identified as one of the cross-cutting themes in the organisational programme. According to the manager, the organisational approach to WEE aimed to support women in becoming earning members of their families with a particular focus on increasing their control over resources:

⁴⁴ 4th Strategic Plan (July 2016 to June 2021).

‘There are many definitions by academics. Our simple definition is that women should be earning members of [their] families, women should have economic opportunities, and, at the same time, they should have control over resources. It’s very important. For that reason, in our programme, we try that ninety per cent of our members in microfinance and enterprise, we call them group members, get a loan and training support. We always ensure and facilitate their control over resources, legally and physically. She can earn money, but if there is no control over her resources, it will not bring any changes.’ (Executive Director, NNGO)

During the interview, all five managers recognised that WEE was a long-term process and that increased income did not automatically translate into women’s empowerment. Challenges persisted particularly with regard to women’s independent decision-making and influence of controlling husbands and other male family members over women’s earnings and their use as well as in procurement of inputs and output sales; although all also highlighted gradual positive changes achieved by their organisations.

2) Barriers to women’s economic empowerment

One of the main barriers to WEE noted by the managers was limitations in women’s control over productive resources. According to the INGO A managers, this was a particular challenge for women with disabilities due to prevalent negative socio-cultural perceptions of women with disabilities as unproductive family members affecting women’s self-confidence. Thus, providing tangible assets to women with disabilities aimed at disrupting these social prejudices according to the INGO A Poverty Graduation Project Coordinator. The coordinator further noted the importance of supporting female caregivers of people with disabilities as economic actors as these women also often struggled to join income generating initiatives due to their high workload of care and other household responsibilities. His colleague underscored the importance of providing women with life skills:

‘In this project, there are some group business plans... We’re trying to link with some women’s co-operatives, like in Rangpur or some other areas; for example, producing carpets. But for us, the objective of the first year and the second year is to build capacities of these women’s groups as self-help groups and start self-esteem building and other psychosocial support and then we’ll introduce [a business element].’ (Head of Programme, INGO A)

According to the MSD Project Manager at INGO B, at individual level, ‘women’s mind-sets’ often resulted in low trust in women’s own capacities to manage business activities successfully, compounded by lacking knowledge, skills and experience, for example, in negotiating with financial institutions. He further noted that, at household and community levels, few female beneficiaries formally owned any productive assets, while also dealing with mobility restrictions imposed due to cultural and religious beliefs. In his view, female producers faced fewer challenges to establish links with market actors, such as input suppliers, but their products were often of a lower quality than those of male producers. Mobility challenges were addressed by facilitated access to services and inputs in close proximity to female producers, while economic inclusion interventions also tackled some underlying challenges to WEE, such as women’s representation in governance. While some challenges could be addressed, reproductive activities were perceived as a static barrier:

‘At the end of the day, she must take care of children, older people and also she must take care of her husband. Then she can perform [tasks regarding her business]. That’s the reality. So it [economic empowerment] takes a longer time than we expect. If she can have income, she can change but it does not happen very fast.’ (MSD Project Manager, INGO B)

All managers also discussed a critical role of acceptance of women’s economic activities by their families. The INGO A managers described how the organisation involved male family members during initial discussions on household-level entrepreneurial options and conducted awareness sessions for men in the target communities on the triple burden of female caregivers of people with disabilities (high care workload, household work and new income-generation activity) and how to reduce it. The entrepreneurial activities sought to involve male family members in certain tasks that cultural restrictions impeded women to do, such as cattle buying or selling at local markets:

‘If in a family, both men and women choose they want to do cow-rearing, in our process, somebody from these beneficiaries must travel to a local market to buy a cow. In our culture it is rare to see a woman to go to such a market. So it’s a male [family member] that travels there. There are also other activities that men are engaged in, like technical training such as cow-rearing. Both women and men get training.’ (Head of Programme, INGO A)

The INGO B MSD manager also highlighted the importance of involving men's groups in awareness sessions on identifying women's barriers to economic involvement. However, according to INGO B's MSD Project Manager, in 'a cultural setting of Bangladesh' it was not feasible that both husband and wife would maintain a paid job without significantly affecting the quality of familial life, or in his words, to lead 'a good and healthy life' and 'have adequate peace':

'In our projects we try to sensitise male counterparts and also try to integrate them into the whole process. But there is no project, as far as I know, to invest in men to advocate for women's empowerment, at least in Bangladesh...Theoretically it's useful. But I am afraid to say that practically it might not be that much useful because women's economic empowerment is not only the issue for women. Let me give you my own example: at the very beginning we decided that I would basically take care of earning and my wife would take care of our household because it is not possible to have a good and healthy life, if both of us have a job. It was decided by both. And sometimes I am told that I am depriving my wife of a job. But how we actually manage? I fulfil her requirements every month – this much I need to pay her. So whatever crisis that I am facing, I must pay her to run the family. It's basically a joint decision. It's not that I am against her having a job. It's also her decision. This is happening. So even the couples that decided that they both would have jobs, how are they managing? They are sacrificing. They don't have life like I have. They cannot spend time together in the house. They probably spend time together during weekends. I mean their time schedules do not match... My family has adequate peace. We make decisions jointly. My family lives in peace.' (MSD Project Manager, INGO B)

According to NNGO's Executive Director, involving male household members improved loan repayment and prevented household-level conflict as it tackled suspicions about women's entrepreneurial efforts. He highlighted that in communication with participating households, it was always made clear that women's entrepreneurial activities did not intend to compete with men but helping maintain a happy and healthy family life. The director further noted that men involved in women's entrepreneurial activities did not feel ignored; instead, they perceived themselves as part of their wife's (sister's, mother's...) business and NNGO's microcredit programme. The director described these *involved* men as responsible individuals, sharing responsibility for family wellbeing with women:

'When we changed our approach, we found very positive changes. Husbands felt that they were [no longer] ignored: I am part of my wife's business; part of the programme. I am no longer hidden, I am recognised as a responsible person. You see, in our society, if you ignore somebody, especially a husband, in a family that is illiterate, poor, that will create an egoistic relationship and that will destroy their happiness.' (Executive Director, NNGO)

Close involvement with borrowers' families was also seen as a way of women's protection:

'How her family can be supportive? ... When we organise orientation meetings and arrange paperwork, we always try to involve her husband, her father and mother, her brother, kids... to be part of the process. We orient them, we give them information what we as an organisation will do with her. She'll feel more supported with our organisation beside her. The family members also think: My wife, my sister, my daughter is not alone; there is an organisation that looks after her wellbeing, look after her rights. That also gives the [family members] information that they cannot [hurt] her. This is also important peer pressure.' (Executive Director, NNGO).

Part of such engagement with family members, particularly men, was also to motivate them to share the burden of household work with women. Getting men to share household tasks was challenging, but some positive changes had been experienced. According to NNGO's Executive Director, awareness about unequal household burden had increased within wider society, while many men also realised that the earning potential of their wives, daughters, sisters, etc. can contribute to family wellbeing. He noted his own increased participation in recent years and described his favourite task (washing up dishes after family breakfast and dinner). Men's interest in becoming a partner in women's businesses was increasing as well. He described a few cases of female borrowers employing their own husbands and paying them wages. Such social and economic arrangements would have been impossible just a decade ago, but in the view of the Executive Director, they had been slowly normalising in society.

3) Employment facilitated by organisations

With regards to employment generated within poverty graduation / economic development programmes, none of the managers could name specific criteria measuring *decent* employment for women. The INGO A managers referred to poverty graduation criteria that included a minimum amount to be earned and saved per month to graduate out of poverty as defined by the Government of Bangladesh. According to the managers, given the fact that poverty

graduation primarily targeted the extreme poor and those recently graduated from extreme poverty in the areas far from urban markets, women's employment largely concentrated in traditionally 'female' types of economic activity, such as homestead livestock and tailoring. Several women also worked as saleswomen selling various goods in nearby villages.

Diversifying employment options was limited due to low education and skills according to the Head of Programme. Thus, familiar business opportunities, such as cow rearing, a grocery shop, or tailoring, were often prioritised as these were perceived by beneficiaries to be low-risk ventures. Extremely poor and illiterate beneficiaries were not confident to enter formal jobs because of their disability and lack of skills. Those that started wage employment soon left because of employment conditions, particularly due to lacking support from an employer and co-workers and commuting barriers. This was the reason why, in the second and third project phases, the strategy focused on self-employment and group business ventures. INGO A partnered with INGO B to introduce the MSD approach to entrepreneurship, but the focus on *freedom* to choose what jobs people with disabilities and caregivers would like to have was crucial:

'In our project almost everyone is self-employed; this means they take care of their own business. They choose their own business and a product; we do not force them. Although, within the project we encourage them to diversify. If they choose what they are comfortable with and there is a market, that will give them enough benefits to get out of poverty.' (Poverty Graduation Project Coordinator, INGO A)

INGO B's manager pointed to 'woman-friendly' sectors based on the assumption that such sectors posed fewer barriers for female entrepreneurs. However, he also noted some 'non-traditional' employment might emerge spontaneously, such as (paid) training services provided by female graduates of a Local Service Providers training carried out by INGO B.

In the experience of the NNGO's Executive Director, most female borrowers were also not ready to enter female 'non-traditional' business sectors, especially in rural areas, where small-scale agro-based businesses dominated. Role models were, however, highly inspirational according to the director. He described the experience of a visually impaired woman, who started her small shop six years ago with a credit of 10,000 taka (107 euros). Recently, she had obtained a new loan of 500,000 taka (5,400 euro). She now had a formal business license and her success story was published in several local media. At the time of the research, NNGO also

conducted an IT training and identified companies willing to accept graduates with disabilities. Several narrated e-books were also produced: *'Rural women can listen to the content [of an e-book] to know about their sexual and reproductive health. We developed the content in a simple and easiest way possible, so that they can easily understand their rights.'* (Disability Rights Manager, NNGO)

These interventions were part of NNGO's commitment to bring digital skills to female borrowers and digitalise microfinance operations. Borrowers were also supported with para-legal services to formalise their businesses, while awareness-raising campaigns targeted service providers to increase their responsiveness to the needs of underserved female clients.

4) *Measuring women's economic empowerment*

INGO A appeared to apply the most structured approach to WEE in its poverty graduation project. The Head of Programme also planned to engage the University of Dhaka in carrying out research on gender and disability to further inform the team's thinking about the strategies for WEE: *'At my level, I took this project document, how we should ensure women's empowerment, following Kabeer's framework, as [addressing reproductive tax], technologies to ease [the workload burden in] woman's lives, etc. I am translating all this into a gender action plan. I will try to identify a possible solution for each indicator'*. (Head of Programme, INGO A)

The MSD manager noted the importance of an action plan that emerged from a gender analysis exploring the barriers to WEE. Three managers from INGOs also referred to disseminating reports with lessons learnt and case studies on WEE to other development actors nationally and internationally.

NNGO's Executive Director described a licensed software, gBanker, as the main tool used to track the results of its microfinance programme. It maintained essential information on borrowers, which could be accessible by any accredited staff member. The data included the borrower's family history, legal guardianship, financial history, national identification number, trade license, date of bank account opening, contract number, witness, and any relevant legal documents. NNGO did not apply other structured approaches to measuring transformative progress on WEE indicators.

5) *Funding for women's economic empowerment*

According to the INGO A managers, most donors were interested to see 'gender' mainstreaming in projects or programmes they funded. However, this did not necessarily mean such interventions supported transformative WEE, even though the concept of women's empowerment frequently appeared in donor guidelines. In their view, many funded organisations now provided economic opportunities for women, however, in reality these did not often disrupt existing inequalities, whether with respect to disability or gender. They also perceived gaps in donors' guidelines which might not be explicit enough to explain what they meant by transformative WEE, while donors themselves might be less pro-active in enforcing their own guidelines. The managers noted Grand Challenges Canada (GCC) as one of the exceptions in the donor community. GCC recently funded the organisation's project on supporting fatherhood in refugee communities and was seen as an example of promoting feminist principles in programming.

The inclusion of men in interventions aiming to contribute to gender equality was also seen as problematic. INGO A's Head of Programme described the gaps in a multi-country project addressing sexual and reproductive health of women with disabilities, which did not include men as a significant stakeholder and there were hardly any substantive activities targeting men beyond 'awareness sessions'. INGO B's MSD manager also believed donors were not willing to allocate funding for stand-alone gender interventions, let alone those targeting men. Organisations therefore had no other option but to integrate these types of interventions within other programmatic activities. He however noted a particular importance to engage male religious leaders in such interventions:

'I want to go back to one question: How you can influence the speed of gender mainstreaming or women's empowerment in Bangladesh. One of the influential groups are religious leaders. They have a very strong influence on this particular issue. If there is any project, it is not that you are making [community people] disbelievers, but if you can [involve] these religious leaders on how these issues can be addressed in a religious way, that would be more effective in Bangladesh. I've had a lot of experience working with communities and mostly the impression that they get is that foreigners are coming and imposing thoughts on our lives: It's not in line with our beliefs. Our religion doesn't allow us to let women go outside home. It's disobedience of religion. If this can be worked out with religious leaders, in a combined effort

to strategize how to encourage participation in a religious way in economic activities, this would be more effective than any other ways.’ (MSD Project Manager, INGO B)

In his view, other influential men in rural communities, such as school masters, could also play a supportive role. Involving influential male figures was particularly useful in rural areas, as in the view of the MSD Project Manager, lower class women in urban areas had always been more mobile and played a larger role in economy. He further added:

‘The question is about women’s security and acceptance by the society. So in that issue, donors can engage more: to raise awareness about women’s participation in market place and other issues. But the point I want to focus on is, that it’s not only men, and it’s not only women. It needs a joint approach – to make them aware about their roles and responsibilities. Help them to decide themselves. They can decide how they will manage their own business. ... A certain percentage of the population is against, well, it has always been against, the participation of women in different activities and different platforms, also against their mobility. You cannot change them. Mostly they are religious believers. But even the families that do not like the mobility of woman, they are sending their female members to a job market. This is happening. Economic development is the requirement of the current development scenario. On one hand they are not keen to allow their daughters or the wife to take part in the market place. But what they are doing, they are establishing in-house outlets.’ (MSD Project Manager, INGO B)

NNGO has a lower dependence on donors as their core microbusiness programme was self-sustaining. Only (non-repayable) grants, training activities and awareness raising activities were funded by donors. This allowed NNGO more flexibility in how to deliver microfinance services to its clients; for example, in offering new financial products. According to the Executive Director, the needs of NNGO’s clients were diverse and required that NNGO constantly innovated its services. For example, the Risk Fund enabled a transfer of a client’s savings to her nominee recorded in the loan application; to repay the loan if a client died, and to cover the loss of assets procured from an NNGO loan.

6) Gender equality in organisational culture

In the view of INGO A’s managers, in-country work on gender equality was more advanced compared to the Head Office (HO), as demonstrated in the current phase of the poverty graduation project, which included specific WEE indicators and activities. It was only recently that the HO introduced the Disability, Gender and Age Marker (DGA Marker):

‘This marker is more like an indicator how transformative we are in project development, inception, throughout the project life cycle, what is our next course of action to make this project inclusive. We also have some other tools and packages that we have in our [online] library. And we also have some checklists when we develop some projects what should be the issues that we should ensure. We also translated gender issues in other ongoing policies, like recruitment policies, how we can ensure gender balance in the team. [But] I would say, we are still at the start in true reflection.’ (Head of Programme, INGO A)

One of the reasons for the tardy adoption of action with regards to gender inclusion by the organisation was the ambiguity at the HO regarding the concept of gender mainstreaming in the past:

‘It [promotion of gender equality] is still not officially in our job description, but I would say it is part of our responsibility right now. It’s one of key advancements [at INGO A country level]. Before we were [discussing that] we should also include gender along with disability, but at HO level there was no focal person [for gender issues]. They were saying that everybody was responsible, that it is cross-cutting for all and technical departments should ensure this gender issue, but practically it was really not implemented. I believe with this marker and these policies, we are more concerned with gender issues.’ (Head of Programme, INGO A)

The review of several strategic documents confirmed gaps in the previous approach. For example, the organisational Strategy (2016-2025) refers to ‘gender’ only once in listing vulnerability by [their] gender, disability or age. The adoption of the DGA Marker and a more comprehensive 2018 Gender Policy was thus seen as a step in the right direction by the INGO A’s managers. Under their leadership, a series of staff training on key concepts related to gender inclusion were launched recently. Such training was received positively by (largely male) staff by and encouraged further learning:

‘Maybe it is too early, but one change that I can see is that people who were in the training for the first time, only a couple worked in a gender programme before, probably they are well-sensitized, but most of the staff said that this was really needed. They acknowledged that this kind of training is needed for all the steps in development projects. Once they go back to their work stations, they will try to link it with their practical work. That is the most important. Before, we just included how many beneficiaries of 500 were male and female. But now we managers and officers think how to get more details, not only how many men and women beneficiaries we have, but how many are actively involved, how many are not, how many are

vocal, how many have no idea what is happening in general. We are kind of digging for more data. That is the change.’ (Poverty Graduation Project Coordinator, INGO A)

According to the MSD Project Manager, INGO B did not follow any specific written gender policy; however, the organisation had the Gender and Society Equity (GASE) strategy, developed by the Head Office (HO), that fulfilled that role. The global 2018-2020 Strategy document also highlighted the gender and social equity cross-cutting theme as an integral part of the organisation’s work. In terms of practical implementation of the gender-related organisational objectives, according to the MSD Project Manager, INGO B in Bangladesh integrated ‘gender sensitisation’ in day-to-day project activities in various ways, including, for example, through on-the-job orientation and mentoring provided by senior managers to their teams with technical backstopping provided by the Gender Coordinator in the HO and the in-country Gender Focal Point. The organisation also recently set to increase the proportion of women in senior management at country level (to one third) as one of the outcomes of a Women’s Leadership Programme training conducted in 2017. Senior managers were encouraged to ensure gender balance in implementation teams and promote ‘gender-friendly’ activities. INGO B was also keen to support young talent and positively discriminate prospective female candidates during recruitment and provided with on-the-job training. In addition, INGO B organised an annual half-day Getting Started training with the involvement of senior level managers. This training includes information on what the concept of gender involves, how INGO B approaches gender inclusion and what challenges can be encountered in the process.

The NNGO’s Executive Director noted that the Gender Policy (2016) was formally approved by the Executive Committee. This means that it is now part of the organisational management policy and thus binding for all staff members, including volunteers, consultants, and contractual partners. The director highlighted that the Gender Policy was introduced to all new staff during an induction training on organisational mission, vision, core values, organisational structure, governance framework and core policies. Upon signing the document, staff members agree to participate in training on gender issues organised by NNGO. According to the director, managers were also required to apply the core policies during an annual staff performance review. In case any complaint is lodged, the Gender Policy specifies how it should be handled and by whom. Complaints are addressed by an independent committee with members representing different sections of the organisation. The policy requires the committee to take action within 48 hours in internal cases and 24 hours upon receiving a complaint from an

external entity. According to the Gender Policy, NNGO “does not tolerate any forms of women abuse [sic] and exploitation and follows zero tolerance policy”. The Executive Director highlighted that this was crucial for protecting the reputation of NNGO as a professional and transparent organisation.

While the Gender Policy primarily regulates staff behaviour, in the view of the Executive Director, it also provides a guideline for the organisational programme as interventions require close contact with communities and target individuals. Moreover, two explicit articles refer specifically to men: non-discrimination of men (3.4.2) and men’s participation in addressing violence against women (3.6.8). It guarantees six-month maternity leave and at least fifty percent of female staff at all levels of the organisation. This inclusive organisational culture is continuously promoted by the senior management. In addition, the Executive Director point to the concept of ‘gender friendliness’ as part of the recent organisational strategic plan (2016-2021) which refers to mutual respect between women and men and ‘human equality’ that is also applied to the organisational environment based on respect and gender equality. Positive discrimination of women and girls is applied to promote women’s and girls’ rights. New projects or programmes are obliged to consult both the Gender Policy and the current strategic plan:

‘The gender policy is mostly for the staff, but at the same time there is a guideline, a strategy for our programme. The gender policy is not only focusing on our staff. As our staff is [strongly] linked with communities and target people, so the gender policy also covers the communities. In our strategic plan, there is a special strategy how we can address gender issues in our programme.’ (Executive Director, NNGO)

The senior staff, particularly men, were perceived instrumental in promoting this organisational approaches according to the NNGO’s Executive Director. He further added that the NNGO staff was diverse and included women and men from various ethnicities and religions, so it was important to build a non-discriminatory work environment, while addressing sensitively certain beliefs that some staff members might have:

‘During the induction, we are very careful not to hurt anybody, anybody’s beliefs. That’s why we use role plays. For senior [managers] it’s mostly a discussion. Gender is also part of our management meetings’ agenda. Especially when we receive a complaint or there is a specific issue. In the management meetings we discuss it and see how we can address it and solve it... Obviously, we have observed some changes. I can mention one or two things. After a training

programme, responsible behaviour is one of the good results of the training. In our organisation our male-to-female ratio is almost 50-50, so it is essential to have responsible behaviour and respect of each other. This type of training is very important for our team members to respect each other. If you look at our organisational core values, gender friendliness and mutual respect are among our core values. Every member should respect, uphold, these values... There are many positive changes. So how has this happened? Through training, orientation, practices. You know, sometimes we know concepts, ideas, but we might not be practicing them. But with gender [equality], you have to know it, you have to believe in it and you have to practice it. Only then it can bring positive changes. Obviously, there are still many challenges.’ (Executive Director, NNGO)

Approaches to promoting gender equality at all three organisations were replicated in partnerships with local organisations. The NGOs strove to enter long-term and strategic partnerships; for example, with women-led disability-focused organisations by INGO A. In the view of the INGO B’ MSD manager, smaller, less experienced local partners mostly did not follow gender-sensitive policies but larger and more experienced NGOs can support their capacity building; for example, INGO B advocated a one third quota of female staff, which many of its local partners now adopted. On the other hand, according to INGO B’s MSD Manager, women’s organisations were not seen as a strategic partner: *‘In [our organisation,] gender is a cross-cutting issue, so there are no projects addressing [only] women’s issues. We haven’t had such kind of partnership with organisations that address specially women’s economic empowerment because it is not even necessary for our projects.* (MSD Project Manager, INGO B)

With respect to NNGO, the organisation established a specific department – the Networking and Strategic Linkage Unit – the role of which is to develop linkages with local NGOs and other civil society organisations (CSOs) based on a partnership policy. According to the Executive Director, some small grass-root CSOs did not have formal registration but they provided valuable services in communities. That was why NNGO started to support them through sub-granting and capacity building. In formal partnerships, NNGO is vocal in encouraging their partners to follow good practices, values and policies supporting women’s inclusion. The Gender Policy mandates NNGO to extend support to all organisations working for women’s empowerment and accept and adopt knowledge and best practice from them:

'Under these partnerships, partners maintain some of the [aspects] from the [Gender] Policy. We are a consortium lead. We receive money and then we distribute it to local partners. Partners then report to us. We implement several projects like that now... Some of these small CSOs don't have registration but they want to do some work. When we have formal partnership with any organisation, they should respect and follow our Gender Policy and women's inclusion.' (Executive Director, NNGO)

Beyond capacity building, NNGO invests in local partnerships for a pragmatic reason of scaling up its reach. With this in mind, NNGO organises seminars, participates in conferences, manages a community radio and even publishes its own journal. In the words of the Executive Director it was also crucial to co-operate with academic institutions. That was also the reason why he devoted significant time to participate in this research.

9.3 Men's views on the prospect of equality between women and men in Bangladesh

The discussion on men's views regarding the prospects of women's equality with men took place during life history narrations (Instrument 4). The theme was discussed from the perspective of men's children; in the case of two childless men, this involved reflection on the prospects of Bangladeshi youth. The responses presented in this section were expressed by nine men, eight of whom were employees of non-governmental organisations, and one was a student at the time of the research. In the quotes, the respondents are distinguished by age and, where relevant, also by their religious affiliation and class.

All nine respondents acknowledged positive social changes occurring in Bangladesh and expressed their optimism about the future of Bangladesh when it comes to equality between women and men. One of the managers in an NGO noted:

'The society is changing rapidly, I would say. When I am thinking about my young age comparing to that period of time, now there is so much change. Women are entering in many kinds of jobs, challenging jobs like defence, police, army. Thirty years ago it was not happening. Even my wife wanted to join the army. Though it didn't happen, but you can imagine that her parents didn't even think about it. ...I can give you an example of my father. I told you earlier that two of my sisters didn't reach even college level. They could not finish high school level. They got married very early. From my five brothers, two went to university. That was common practice in those times. My father now says that we are more advanced than Pakistan because fifty per cent of women are productive; they are working, earning money in different sectors – in shops, in the business sector. In Pakistan women are not productive. So my father is saying things he would not have said thirty – forty years ago. These kinds of paradoxes are happening.' (NGO worker in his forties)

According to the student from an upper class family, however, social transformation would require much more time:

'Relations between women and men are improving, if we support this idea that men and women should be equal. I do not believe that it is possible to change the mind of every person in society. A lot of people will still believe that women should cover up and stay home and I do believe that there will be a lot of places in the country where these practices will never change and will stay [the same] because media do not pay attention, because there aren't enough people that would be vocal about these things, because they are disconnected from the society, from

the modern society, in a lot of ways. I do see a positive future about these things but that's not very near. At some point it will be better but not soon.' (Student)

Amongst other institutions, the Government of Bangladesh and the development sector were noted as the most influential actors spearheading positive social transformation in Bangladesh:

'Especially the present government, they support development of women at community level. They care about women's development...In the development sector, and in the government sector, we now never think who's woman, who's man. It was like that before. The development sector [in Bangladesh] is a huge community. We are more advanced in development of women than other countries like India and Pakistan. This has been also our government initiative. We have done many things for women'. (NGO worker in his fifties)

Another NGO worker highlighted the fundamental role of education in driving social changes:

'There are a lot of things I can tell you. First, women should be confident enough, they should be strong, like my aunt. If women are weak mentally, others will try to take advantage of them. I would say in order to be confident, they need education, they need to go outside, they need to see the world first to build confidence. This is the role of education and the media. Proper education is important. Teachers should provide proper education, be friendly with [female] students. Education is the main thing. For example, I told you that my sisters and my wife are not very far from each other; there is only like three kilometres. But these three kilometres is a huge difference. Because my wife is from the same area. But my sisters were in the village and my wife in a city area. My sisters were very pretty, they were intelligent, but they didn't get the opportunity to study further like my wife. This is because my wife got the opportunity to go to university, her life is different. And of course, their mind-set is different now.' (NGO worker in his forties)

This respondent further emphasised a specific role for men in encouraging women's education:

'Men should encourage women to see the world, to study, to grow – study is everything to me. Study is the main thing. It is the thing that changes everything. Even for me as a man. If I compare myself with my childhood friends from the village, I mean I am also from a village, but I see so many differences between us. It's the same for women. If we want to see women to grow, women should study and men should encourage them. For example, in the family, the brother should be the main person to encourage his sisters to study. Because sometimes parents don't. Like my father. My sisters married young and my brother was not very strong to go

against my father's will. My mother couldn't. My brother was the only person that could have changed things for my sisters'. (NGO worker in his forties)

Despite this respondent's apprehension about the rise of conservative Islamic forces in Bangladesh, he remained optimistic about the future of his country:

'There is change but it is not even everywhere and it's slower in other places [outside of Dhaka]. But I am still optimistic because I used to talk to my father about the situation during the period of the British colony and then during the Pakistan rule. If we compare, the present situation in Bangladesh is much better. We see a lot of good things. Of course, there are new challenges, like Islamic fundamentalism, there are risk factors, but I am optimistic. Now we have fifty percent students in schools are girls, previously there were ten percent, previously even one percent. I am very optimistic about Bangladesh future.' (NGO worker in his forties)

The NGO worker from an upper-class family also emphasised the role of higher education and advocated for education on women's rights in school curricula: *'A few people still go to university... The change ...should be promoted in family and schools. Mind of our people must change. It's good that our government has a positive view of women's rights. This education [on women's rights] should be in school curriculum'.* (NGO worker in his thirties)

One of the older NGO workers pointed to the importance of discussions on women's equality with men and its implementation in practice in other sectors of the Bangladesh society, beyond NGOs: *'I don't know about other professions, like government jobs or private sector, ...but [discussions about equality] should be practiced equally to achieve a better progressive change.'* (NGO worker in his fifties)

The increased tolerance of other views in society was highlighted by the NGO worker with strong religious affiliation: *'We must respect our community, our religion, but also other views.'* (NGO worker in his fifties)

According to another older NGO worker with stronger religious affiliation, there were many challenges with top-down approaches to promoting women's equality with men without sufficient involvement of grass-root leaders, including religious leaders. He noted that, *'in a Muslim society...they have a really good level of influence to shape behaviour of people, culture issues'* (NGO worker in his fifties). He acknowledged that, at least to some extent, these leaders have been involved and that, *'imams in mosques during weekly prayers...continuously preach on behalf of the government'* (NGO worker in his fifties).

In the view of a middle-age NGO worker with weak religious affiliation, the situation in Bangladesh has been changing but much more still needed to be done. As a solution, he proposed mandatory training on 'gender' equality in state institutions:

'There are not enough training facilities to train men in the way we do it in NGOs and sometimes in the private sector. I don't think this issue is taken very seriously [by the rest of the society]. Another issue is with the rural areas. Nobody is working with rural people. Many people in rural areas are illiterate and it's hard to convince people about these issues. But it is changing nowadays. Particularly amongst educated people, progressive-minded people and private organisations. The government organisations should have mandatory training on gender issues and child protection issues, so I think the situation will be improving'. (NGO worker in his fifties)

Two of the NGO workers discussed their personal role in accelerating women's equality with men. The upper class NGO employee described his activism in the following statement: *'I write a blog in Bangla and work in NGOs. This is my contribution. I cannot change the entire society but I can [at least] influence things in my family.'* (NGO worker in his thirties)

The youngest participant presented his approach: *'I have already started playing some role. People that I interact with every day, a lot of these people do have these ideas that women are inferior, that women should be objectified in a lot of ways. I try to change these notions that they hold with my opinions. Whenever they pass a comment that suggests women are objects, I try to stop them, convince them that what they are saying is wrong. That what they are saying, would not be able to say openly because they know it is wrong. I try to do that every day within groups of people I interact with so that's a start for me and I believe that a lot of young men like me do that because change cannot be started, unless you get that seed out of their heads that women should be objectified, that women should be kept behind closed door. So that could be a start for a lot of young men like me.'* (Student)

9.4 Key conclusions of the analysis of men's views on equality strategies

None of the five male managers involved in the analysis of men's interpretations of organisational approaches to WEE was aware of a clearly outlined understanding of transformative WEE that would encourage a systematic, structured and measured WEE intervention. Two INGO A managers appeared the most advanced in their theoretical knowledge on WEE in line with the WEE theories presented in Chapter 3. On the other hand, all five workers were aware of the limitations of income-based approaches to WEE and referred to a more holistic approach, including women's control of (productive) resources, 'having voice' and enhancing women's agency (Batliwala, 1993; 1994; Rowland, 1995; Sen, 1997). WEE was perceived as a challenging process that required time, i.e. it could not be achieved within a one-off and short-term intervention. The managers perceived their organisations as 'facilitators' of development processes leading to women's empowerment and were careful to reject strategies that could be seen as imposing on community members and restricting their rights in line with the critique of top-down development (Rowlands, 1995; Mowles, 2013; O'Neil, Domingo and Valters, 2014).

Furthermore, while all five managers understood the need to build women's skills in managing an economic enterprise, they also focused on complementary competencies, such as enhancing women's psycho-social and life skills, particularly self-confidence to assume paid economic roles and communication skills when interacting with market actors. In addition, all men referred to female role models that resisted patriarchal attitudes and practices in labour market relations. The INGO B and NNGO representatives perceived these women as social agents of change (Sen, 1999; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005) with agency disrupting social norms. Nonetheless, such women were conceptualised as accidental and marginal products of WEE interventions, rather than a central goal of WEE interventions, sought for most, if not all, women.

All managers discussed the importance of conducting a participatory 'gender' analysis supporting programmatic work, while community and household level approvals were also sought to facilitate interventions. While relevant, the managers did not seem to comprehend a problematic notion of concepts such as 'participation', 'community' or 'freedom to choose', particularly in the understanding of the three INGO B and INGO A managers. These are loaded concepts masking less overt inequalities that can lead to exclusion of individuals with less power. They can be affected by internalised oppression, false consciousness and patriarchal bargain (Pheterson, 1986; Rowlands, 1995; Kandyioti, 1988; Phillips, 2004) which undermine

democratic deliberation (Sen, 1999) within decision-making at household and community levels.

By supporting women's self-employment in micro-enterprises, all managers conformed to the thesis of the 'natural' (poor) entrepreneur promoted, among others, by Prahalad (2005). While the justifications provided by the senior managers seemed valid (e.g. limited education and skills; uncooperative employers; risk aversion; lack of jobs), it also seemed that job creation within such projects is conducted in isolation from broader labour market policies and reforms benefiting low-income women. Self-employment also appeared a less preferred option to formal jobs by both low-income women and men (findings from Instruments 1 and 2). Piecemeal strategies to WEE have been critiqued extensively by the research on WEE (Hanlon, Barrientos, Hulme, 2010; Karim, 2011; Ashraf, 2014; Duvendack and MacLean, 2015; King, Sintès and Alemu, 2018).

Consistent with other discussions in this research, all managers were aware of mobility restrictions imposed on women, linked to violence in public spaces. In the reflections by INGO A and INGO B's managers, women's restricted mobility was perceived as a static cultural given, rather than a consequence of power relations that can be challenged and changed, as indicated in the discourse by NNGO's Executive Director. A similar static perception of women's reproductive (unequal) responsibilities was offered by INGO B's manager ('she must take care of her husband...that's the reality'), while the INGO A and NNGO managers promoted solutions to address unequal household burden to reduce women's reproductive tax (Palmer, 1995), including by mobilising men to increase their share of care and household tasks.

In line with the static interpretations, women's economic options were limited within 'traditional' sectors and roles that do not have many mobility requirements. While this approach may be a quick and practical fix (Walker, 2013) to women's mobility challenges and horizontal segregation in the labour market (ADB, 2016), it can be also seen as undermining transformative WEE (Cornwall, 2016), which seeks to disrupt unequal power relations and economic inequalities – the aim that should be sought by development actors committed to human rights and equality. Research indicates that women's increased mobility is conducive to WEE (Kabeer, 2011), not only with respect to new income opportunities but also women's exposure to new information, social and economic contacts and progressive lifestyles as indicated in the focus group discussions (Instruments 1 and 2).

On a positive note, all managers were aware of the importance of involving women's family and community members, including male members, with the objective to facilitate WEE. INGO A's managers and NNGO's Executive Director described the mobilisation of men in redistributing reproductive responsibilities at household level. All managers described co-operation between women and men in entrepreneurship, while supporting awareness-raising, seeking support for women's economic inclusion. Implicitly, by supporting women's entrepreneurship, all programmes undermined a patriarchal male breadwinner household model in target communities, and instead promoted a dual-earner household, although this might not necessarily mean the erosion of the gender norms related to the male primary breadwinner.

The views of INGO B's manager revealed ambiguity with respect to promoting a dual-earner household in Bangladesh. He supported women's inclusion in economic activities as part of his paid employment, but also held negative views on dual-earner households justified by a static understanding of 'culture' in Bangladesh requiring a male breadwinner to provide for his home-making wife. In his views, marriage was perceived as a business contract, including a financial transaction between a husband and a wife and firm responsibilities of both parties. This set-up reflected the deeply-rooted patriarchal notions of a male primary breadwinner and household services provided by a female counterpart based on patriarchal bargain (Kandiyoti, 1988; Musawah, 2018). These discursively constructed figures were located within a patriarchal gender order undermining the notion of marital democracy claimed to be practiced in his household.

Such a deeply-rooted operation of a patriarchal gender system was also a likely contributing factor in women's seemingly 'voluntary' delegation of certain entrepreneurial tasks to their husbands, noted by the INGO A and INGO B managers. Taking these as cultural givens, rather than exploring what they stemmed from (e.g. internalised patriarchy, constrained agency) and what was their consequence for WEE (e.g. continued lack of women's exposure to market actors and lack of experience to deal with them) is a significant weakness to WEE's understanding as a transformative project. This does not mean to say women and men should not collaborate and manage joint enterprises, but such complementary relations should not hinder enhancement of women's economic capabilities and perpetuate gender inequalities, as implied by the conservative Islamic discourse on female/male relations discussed in Section 2.3.1.

In contrast, NNGO's Executive Director was aware of cultural limitations, but he framed these as temporal obstacles that can be challenged and transformed. He narrated a number of explicit positive benefits, such as improvement of loan repayment, reducing household-level conflict, tackling mistrust of women by men, and building a co-operative and peaceful household with improved wellbeing. His discourse acknowledged male patriarchal fear of women 'competing' with men in the labour market but this problem could be challenged. This rationale implicitly integrated the concept of marital co-operation (Ahmed, 2008, 2014) based on love, mutual respect and care in household (hooks, 1998; Pease, 2014). In addition, NNGO's Executive Director incorporated the notion of men as women's partners, challenging gender stereotypes associated with 'irresponsible' men (Chant and Gutmann, 2002; Connell, 2005; Pease, 2014; Ratele, 2015). Making men, especially *embattled* men (Connell, 2005; Silberschmidt, 2011; Chakrabarty, 2014) visible within WEE contributed not only to the NNGO's transformative WEE goals but also to enhancing dignity of poor men in these processes.

Significantly, all five managers were knowledgeable of various ways their organisations supported the promotion of equality of women and men, although this did not explicitly refer to women and men outside the heterosexual imperative. The managers gave examples of various programmatic innovations and the role of senior managers driving these changes. However, some donor-favoured approaches, such as MSD, applied by INGOs A and B, may fail to incorporate transformative WEE strategies in interventions, by their emphasis on market-based approaches, and inadvertently contribute to reinforcement of some patriarchal gender norms.

All managers referred to some form of gender policy guiding organisational work, with the highest level of enforcement by NNGO. The recent experience at INGO A exemplified the challenge of misconceiving the concepts of gender mainstreaming, gender equality, and gender equity and how to implement them in practice. Nonetheless, and as highlighted by the NNGO's Executive Director, there should be primary emphasis on staff members' understanding and *believing* in transformative WEE and less on producing tools to engage in WEE. Even though such tools can be useful, not understanding their core principles undermines their purpose.

In terms of measuring transformative changes sought within WEE, it appeared that only INGO A's managers were aware of a systematic approach to such evidence-based measurement. Such approaches should primarily capture outcome and impact level indicators aligned with strategic, long-term WEE goals, not just those related to women's practical needs (Molyneux,

1985; Moser, 1989), while including qualitative methods (Mowles, 2013; Chambers, 2017). In addition, there was some acknowledgement of senior male managers' positive roles in promoting organisational commitments to gender equality, however, current approaches did not actively use male NGO employees as influential role models of progressive masculinities.

With respect to funding, in addition to risks associated with an extremely competitive environment for awarding grants (aggravated by the Covid-19 pandemic), the managers did not perceive it to be realistic to access funding supporting progressive masculinities facilitating WEE, particularly due to a lack of donors' interest. The only solution was seen within integrated programming, which would be contingent on planners' understanding to prioritise such interventions.

Working with male religious leaders was highlighted as a particularly useful intervention by INGO B's manager. To contribute to transformative WEE goals, such work would require an understanding of various interpretations of the Islamic message on women's equality with men (Kabasakal Arat and Hasan, 2017; Musawah, 2018; Nazneen, 2009, 2018) as well as separating cultural norms from those mandated by Islamic texts. Seeking alignment of religious and feminist goals is a contentious endeavour (Badran, 2009; Nazneen, 2009; Salem, 2013; Zakiuddin, 2015). However, employing a religious doctrine in WEE strategies could address some challenges associated with WEE, understood as a foreign and imposed agenda attacking Islam noted by INGO B's manager.

The eleven respondents, including ten male senior managers in five NGOs and one student, that provided inputs for the analysis in Sections 9.2 and 9.3, were rather positive about the prospects of equality between women and men in Bangladesh. They demonstrated optimism about their contribution to this agenda, consistent with the notion of working towards gender equality as a positive project for men (Connell, 2005). The rapid changes that had been occurring in the society in recent years were welcome by these men, particularly when thinking about the prospect of a better life for their own children.

Two of the men (student and the upper class NGO worker) also noted their own proactive role as social agents in promoting social progress (Sen, 1999; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005), while another NGO worker advocated replicating positive approaches to promoting equality between women and men in other sectors of the Bangladeshi society, beyond the development sector. The NGO worker with strong religious affiliation did not perceive these changes as being opposed to fundamental ideals of his faith or alien to the culture of his country. Overall,

ten out of eleven respondents appeared to adhere to Advocate masculinities, whereas one NGO worker demonstrated some ambiguities with respect to his role in maintaining personal and public patriarchy.

Nine out of ten senior male NGO staff consistently demonstrated attitudes correlated with the human rights missions of their organisations. The progressive culture and the mission of the organisations appeared to play a significant role influencing men's views, compounded with their middle/upper class status, urban live styles and higher education.

Chapter 10

Conclusions and Contribution of the Study

10.1 Introduction

Chapter 10 concludes this study. Section 10.2 first presents the adapted definitions of masculinity markers introduced in Section 1.3. The subsequent Section 10.3 summarises the key findings of the research, considering the central research question. The chapter then continues with a discussion in Section 10.4 on policy recommendations arising from the study with respect to development praxis and the inclusion of masculinities in WEE, as well as more broadly from the perspective of enhancing women's economic rights. The final part of the chapter, Section 10.5, offers some suggestions for further research on the subject of masculinities and women's economic freedoms.

The Men's Empowerment Framework (MEF) that emerged from this study is presented in Annex 1. The purpose of MEF is to encourage development planners to include masculinities in women's economic empowerment (WEE) programming and enhance men's positive roles in WEE. It is not a prescriptive tool but rather offers guidance for development actors when engaging with men in their diverse embodiments and roles within WEE interventions. The framework is presented in three main parts. It first explains the purpose of MEF, including principles that should guide the MEF's application in praxis. It then suggests ways of working with Antagonist, Ally and Advocate men. Finally, it offers a guide how to plan a masculinity-inclusive WEE intervention.

The notion of men's empowerment stems from perceiving men as subjects (Freire, 1970) or agents (Sen, 1999), not objects, of development processes. Empowerment requires men to become a listening audience (Uddin, 2006) and gain critical consciousness (Freire, 1970) of unequal power relations between women and men in public and private spheres and the negative impacts these may have on individual lives and society as a whole. Hence, it is necessary to work with men on structural gender inequalities affecting men's attitudes as well as practices within institutions and societal systems and structures. This by no means signifies that *all* men would be willing to adhere to progressive masculinities and take a pro-active role in dismantling structural gender inequalities, but, over time, a critical mass of men might, positioning Advocate masculinities (in diverse forms) as mainstream hegemonic masculinities. Development actors, in their specific roles, are uniquely positioned to support men in building progressive masculinities, targeting, in particular, men adhering to Ally masculinities.

10.2 Masculinity conceptualisations uncovered in the field research

This section discusses three conceptualisations of masculinities identified for this research as guiding masculinity markers, presented in Chapter 1. Each original definition is cross-examined using the results obtained through five research instruments (Instruments 1-5) and the revised definition of each masculinity conceptualisation is presented thereafter. The differences identified between the original definition and the revised version are presented in Tables 10.1-10.3, including the summary of key differences.

As already noted elsewhere, these masculinity conceptualisations are abstract and fluid categories that help explain men's adherence to particular attitudes, behaviours and practices and norms that underpin them. For that reason, the definitions refer to plural masculinities within each category, while underscoring that many men may, in reality, demonstrate hybrid masculinities, involving both progressive and conservative aspects in different situations (Bridges and Pascoe, 2014; Jewkes et al., 2015). In addition, it is not suggested that the definitions of Antagonist, Ally and Advocate masculinities presented in this section contradict the work of other authors on the subject of masculinities and their linkages with WEE. They only reflect those specific aspects that emerged through the field work and the theoretical explorations of the concept of WEE and masculinities carried out by this research.

In addition, given the focus of this study and its methodology, it was highly unlikely the study would include men with severe misogynistic views, a likely sub-group of Antagonist men. To address attitudes, behaviours and practices of such men would require specific strategies, largely beyond the capacities of mainstream development interventions. For that reason, these masculinities are not considered in the scope of this study.

10.2.1 Antagonist masculinities

This sub-section presents a revised understanding of Antagonist masculinities, based on the results presented in Chapters 5-9, followed by its comparison with the working definition presented in Section 1.3.

Men demonstrating Antagonist masculinities tend to oppose women's equality with men in private and public spheres, justified by cultural, religious or biological stereotypical arguments about masculine and feminine roles. Resistance to women's equality can involve specific structures and institutions, such as the labour market, religion or educational and political systems as well as everyday lived experience, including within marriage, family and fatherhood. Standpoints, behaviours and practices of Antagonist men demonstrate adherence to the notion of men's superiority over women in both private and public life. Antagonist men may be impacted by various factors that have restricted their own life choices, such as low education, poverty and disability, contributing to their social conservatism.

Antagonist men can support some women's practical needs such as that of being educated, however, they insist on men preserving the role of the primary breadwinner in their families and claiming men's 'right' to employment over women. They demonstrate controlling behaviour towards a wife and children, including mobility control, and request their obedience. They select spouses for their children and prefer sons to access education, explained by a patriarchal expectation of sons becoming future breadwinners. Daughters may still receive education and be allowed to find employment based on certain conditions (such as approval by a father/husband, home-bound workplace or in close proximity to home, socially acceptable occupation).

Antagonist men demonstrate heightened sexualised perceptions of private and public spheres based on men's virility and mistrust of women, which dictates their preventing women from interactions outside their immediate kinship and community networks. From their perspectives, other men cannot be trusted and therefore women should be confined to their households and immediate community and their chastity and mobility controlled by a husband or another (primarily male) relative. Religious men perceive themselves as 'women's guardians', the notion grounded in protectionist, socially conservative Islamic interpretations of relationships between men and women. Antagonists are also likely deeply homophobic, justified by religious beliefs and/or cultural constructions of 'natural' sexual behaviour.

Antagonist men oppose sexual violence and are less likely to employ physical violence against women, but they may engage in psychological and economic violence to maintain domination over women. Psychological and economic violence can affect children and other household members. Positive emotional connections within family, such as care and love between husband and wife and father and children, are reduced, but Antagonist men may value family ‘happiness’, although not linking it with women’s freedoms. Antagonists are less likely to intervene when witnessing (physical/sexual) violence against women and girls.

Women’s engagement in economic activities, especially when these are carried out outside the immediate neighbourhood, is opposed, but they can be justified to reduce family poverty, when involving the prospect of a substantial financial reward, and accessing a socially prestigious job. Any women’s economic activity should be ‘dignified’ and minimise interactions with alien men. Still, Antagonist men fear an economically independent woman based on apprehension about women’s abandonment of men. Women pursuing careers are viewed negatively, including men’s fear of neglect of husband and children. Antagonist men oppose women’s ownership rights and insist on maintaining control over productive means and women’s earnings. In the view of Antagonist men, regardless of her employment status, a woman’s primary responsibility is to take care of the household. Antagonist men oppose men’s participation in household and care tasks, although they may perceive a positive correlation between their interest in household affairs and a wife’s happiness.

Table 10.1: Comparison of the theoretical conceptualisation of Antagonists with the research findings

Methodological definition of Antagonists	Verification based on research findings
Opposition to women’s equality in private and public spheres	✓ lack of interest/rejection of gender equality, support to some practical needs
Justifications based on cultural, religious and social stereotypes about masculine and feminine roles (Mac Cormack and Strathern, 1980; Kandiyoti, 1988; Folbre, 1994; Butler, 2007)	✓ cultural, religious, biological, hidden drivers
Resistance within structures and institutions (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Pease, 2014; Ratele, 2015)	✓ labour market, religion, marriage/family, boy’s preference in education and employment
Resistance in private lives (Kandiyoti, 1988; Ahmed, 2008, 2014; Pease, 2014)	✓ controlling marital relationship and fatherhood, male primary breadwinner, gender stereotypical roles
Imagined ‘traditional’ masculinity (Kimmel, 1996; Butler, 2007)	✗ not referring to ‘past’ but traditional = socially/religiously conservative; conscious choice
Toxic/hyper-masculine traits, including homophobia, fundamentalism in views (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, Ahmed, 2006; Jewkes et al, 2015)	✓ potential homophobia, conservative religious views
Heightened sexualised perceptions of private and public spheres (Bartky, 1988; Ahmed, 2008, 2014; Hasan, Aggleton and Persson, 2018)	✓ biological essentialism ✓ mistrust of women and other men

Prevention of women/men interactions outside immediate kinship relations (Kandiyoti, 1988; Karim, 2011; Hughes, 2017)	✓ women-only workplace, reduced mobility within immediate community only
Women's chastity and mobility controlled by husband/another male relative (Anwary, 2015; Hughes, 2017; Musawah, 2018)	✓ women's sexuality can be controlled, not men's, selective reading of Qur'anic guidance
Women's relationship with male 'protector'/'guardian' based on obedience (Kandiyoti, 1988; Karim, 2011; Asadullah and Wahhaj, 2016; Hughes, 2017; Ussher et al., 2017; Sen, 2018)	✓ punishment by men due to 'shame' caused by women
Women's control by men can involve psychological and physical violence (Anway, 2015)	✗ sexual, less physical violence ✓ psychological, economic, not stopping violence ✓ potential psychological, material/economic violence in the household
Crippled emotional relations between husband and wife (Ahmed, 2008, 2014)	✓ fewer interactions between father and children, controlling behaviour; but may value happiness
Discouraged/opposed women's engagement in economic activities, especially outside home (Asadullah and Wahhaj, 2016; Kabeer, Mahmud and Tasneem, 2017)	✓ agreement when justified by poverty, home/community-based, dignified, socially valued, well rewarded, reduced interaction with men
Restricted women's access to productive means, including financial resources and services (Ambrus, Field and Torero, 2010; Kabeer, Mahmud and Tasneem; Schoen, 2018)	✓ limitations of asset ownership, access to bank account, stereotypes about women's skills
Men's superiority over women in both private and public life (MacCormack and Strathern, 1980) including men's opposition to carrying out household and care tasks (Budlender, 2008; Barker and Pawlak, 2011; Musawah, 2018)	✓ stereotypes about women's skills, boy's preference, men's 'right' to employment over women ✓ some consultations on household affairs, some interest in child rearing
Religious beliefs grounded in the 'protectionist' Islamic interpretation of gender relations (Maitrot, 2017; Musawah, 2018; Nazneen, 2018)	✓ religiously and socially conservative interpretation of gender relations

The revised definition of Antagonist masculinities broadly conforms to the methodological definition presented in Section 1.3. In line with the definition, based on the study findings, Antagonists manifested controlling behaviour towards women rooted in essentialist biological, cultural and religious stereotypes. This included restricting women's mobility and their economic opportunities. The field results also confirmed reduced quality of personal relationships maintained by Antagonists. However, the research suggests Antagonists are less likely to engage in / support physical and sexual violence, although they may not actively intervene to stop it. They are also likely to engage in psychological and economic violence against women. Although Antagonists feared socially and economically independent women, they were not against women's paid employment and may relax some restrictions regarding women's behaviour, when employment is justified by poverty, is home / community-based or is well rewarded. As anticipated, Antagonists opposed transformation of patriarchal relations between women and men, but they valued women's happiness and supported some practical needs women may have, such as education.

10.2.2 Ally masculinities

This sub-section presents a revised understanding of Ally masculinities, based on the results presented in Chapters 5-9, followed by its comparison with the working definition presented in Section 1.3.

Men demonstrating Ally masculinities are aware of various barriers and challenges women face individually and as a social category, including in the labour market. They are interested in the subject of gender equality, although this may involve supporting women's practical needs, rather than gender transformative changes. Ally men demonstrate respect and some trust in women, and oppose physical and sexual violence against women. They would likely interfere if witnessing such violence in public. They can, however, often inadvertently, engage in psychological and economic violence against women, stemming from gender stereotypical views. Ally men are against women's seclusion in their homes, but can maintain some control of women's mobility, while mistrusting other men's intentions.

Ally men support women's ownership rights and some financial independence from men. However, in their views, men are primary breadwinners, and they would feel emasculated, if they could not fulfil this role. They approve of women's life outside the family, including engagement in economic activities, but these should not interfere with women's care responsibilities and other household work along the lines of gender stereotypical labour division, although men may be involved in some reproductive activities, particularly childcare. Ally men might be aware that their fatherhood model is more progressive than their fathers'.

Standpoints by Ally men are influenced by some prejudiced views regarding women's skills and competencies. They might not oppose women in leadership positions but may be complicit in maintaining horizontal and vertical segregation of women in the labour market by excluding women from certain jobs. They also demonstrate fear of an economically independent woman that, in their perception, would lead to neglect or abandonment of men. Given their mistrust of other men, Ally men would prefer if women's employment was home or community-based.

Within their families, Ally men exhibit reduced controlling behaviour in comparison to Antagonist men. Husbands in the Allies category demonstrate care and love for their spouse and children and family members' happiness is important to them. They may still insist on selecting children's spouses but are more careful to avoid potential harm to their children. Education is not restricted to sons, and, financial means permitting, Ally men would support higher education of girls as well.

Men demonstrating Ally masculinities lean towards a more egalitarian understanding of a societal gender order than Antagonist men but are either unaware of or are unwilling to give up their own patriarchal privileges to enhance women's freedoms. Their masculinities are complicit in maintaining a patriarchal gender order, particularly in the privacy of their homes, while supporting some practical women's needs. Ally men tend to lean towards relatively egalitarian religious beliefs favouring women's equal rights. Their hybrid masculinities, involving certain progressive aspects, make them a likely listening audience regarding systemic obstacles hindering women's equality with men. Learning about these can stimulate Allies' potential involvement in women's transformative economic empowerment.

Table 10.2: Comparison of the theoretical conceptualisation of Allies with the research findings

Methodological definition of Allies	Verification based on research findings
Awareness of barriers and challenges faced by women individually and as a social category; may feel solidarity (hooks, 1984; Holter, 2003; Pease, 2014; Jewkes et al., 2015)	✓ including in labour market, but also some prejudice over women's skills and competencies ✓ respecting women, interest in 'gender equality'
Opposition to violence against women, severe restrictions of mobility and exclusion from assets ownership (Agarwal (1994; Ahmed, 2008; 2014)	✓ opposition to physical, sexual violence; action if witnessing ✗ inadvertent psychological, economic violence (overlooking multidimensional women's empowerment) ✓ some control of women's mobility; stronger mistrust of other men than women ✓ some women's financial independence approved
Man as a primary breadwinner; gender stereotypical division of labour in the household (Kabeer, Mahmud and Tasneem; 2017; Hasan, Aggleton and Persson, 2018)	✓ emasculation if the role not fulfilled; approval of women's life outside family ✓ some limited involvement by men in reproductive activities, particularly childcare
Some stereotypes and prejudices about women's skills	✓ including in labour market; some fear of independent women; home-/community based jobs
Not aware of patriarchal privilege (Connell, 2005; Pease, 2006, 2014)	✓ may be aware but less willingness to give it up ✓ likely lack of awareness of how to support women
Complicit in maintaining patriarchy at household and societal levels (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Pease, 2006)	✓ primarily private patriarchy, may support women's public roles, including their spouses; risk of Minow's paradox
Care and love for spouse and children (hooks, 1998; Ahmed, 2008, 2014)	✓ some controlling behaviour; family members' happiness important
Potential listening audience' on the issues of women's equality leading to action Connell, 2005; Farré, 2011; Pease, 2014; Jewkes et al., 2015)	✓ leaning towards liberal understanding of gender order including within religious beliefs; supporting practical needs, less gender transformative changes ✓ entry points – marital/family happiness, Islam

The revised definition of Ally masculinities is broadly in line with the methodological definition presented in Section 1.3. Based on the study results, Allies are complicit in maintaining patriarchal relations in private and public domains. In particular, they assert their

role of the primary breadwinner. Although Allies, in general, support women's employment, like Antagonists, they are apprehensive about socially and economically independent women and impose some limitations on women's mobility. As presumed, Allies openly oppose sexual and physical violence. However, the research suggests Allies may inadvertently engage in psychological and economic violence against women and girls by overlooking multidimensional benefits of WEE. In addition, although Allies favoured gender-stereotypical division of labour, they may involve in some reproductive activities, particularly childcare, given their support to new fatherhood models. Allies also manifested some support for women in accessing public roles, but were less willing to give up patriarchal privilege in privacy of their homes. This may be also the effect of Minow's paradox and men's hidden adherence to deeply-rooted gender stereotypical norms.

10.2.3 Advocate masculinities

This sub-section presents a revised understanding of Advocate masculinities, based on the results presented in Chapters 5-9, followed by its comparison with the working definition presented in Section 1.3.

Advocate men are acutely aware of inequalities experienced by women and negative impacts on both women's and men's private lives as well as society at large. They are against discriminatory practices (such as lack of paternal leave) and reject any form of violence (including against men), while being aware that transformation of patriarchal masculinities is a gradual and complex process. Advocate men's viewpoints are less grounded in religious norms, however, this group may also include believers with moderate to strong religious background. These men adhere to the egalitarian understanding of Islamic/Muslim masculinities based on equality of women and men. Despite their progressive stance with respect to women's equal rights, Advocate men may inadvertently demonstrate residual stereotypes about femininities and enjoy some patriarchal privileges, although this may stem from lack of awareness.

Advocate men actively oppose restrictions in women's mobility and their economic and social exclusion by taking action, if demonstrations of gender injustice are encountered, although they might also overlook some aspects of patriarchal privilege in their social context. Their support to enhancing women's equality with men is extended to both private and public spheres. In general, Advocate men oppose a male primary breadwinner role and expect their children to

live in dual-earner households. Fathers are proud of their daughters and have a keen interest in ensuring ‘every opportunity’ for them. This includes investment in daughters’ education leading to their employment of their own choice, as well as freedom to select their life partners. Advocate men aim to share household work with their wives, particularly childcare, and are committed to increasing their share in the future, if not already adequate. They demonstrate respect for dignity, trust and affection towards women in both public and private relations, including marriage and the workplace.

Men demonstrating Advocate masculinities hold egalitarian views on women’s skills and competencies, while seeing the benefits of a gender-mixed work environment and the positive impact of paid employment on women, beyond access to independent income. They do not resolve risks of violence against women in the public domain by restricting women’s mobility, but support alternative strategies, such as policing men’s behaviour and advocating improved public services. Advocate men strive to live by the ideals of democratic manhood, including using opportunities to publicly dismantle stereotypical views about women’s and men’s roles in society and in the privacy of the home, although some Advocates’ public roles may be more conducive to such a proactive approach than others. They position themselves as women’s partners, seeking collaborative partnerships in private and public roles. Liberal views on gender relations may include openness to a broader understanding of gender identities, beyond the heterosexual binary, although this may be a controversial issue for Advocates with stronger religious views.

Advocate men are rather optimistic about future prospects of women’s equality with men in Bangladesh and the positive impact on men themselves, but remain cautious due to a number of factors that can lead to regression in positive societal developments in recent years. In the current context of the country, Advocate men represent marginal alternative masculinities comparable to global progressive masculinities encompassed in universal human rights instruments, including the Sustainable Development Goals. They aspire or can be encouraged to contribute to the consolidation of positive hegemonic masculinities, which can move Advocate masculinities from their currently marginal location to the societal mainstream.

Table 10.3: Comparison of the theoretical conceptualisation of Advocate with the research findings

Methodological definition of Advocate	Verification based on research findings
Acute awareness of inequalities and impacts on women and men (Kimmel, 1996; hooks, 1998; Flood, 2005; 2015; Pease, 2014; Jewkes et al., 2015)	✓ non-violence, rejection of patriarchy, awareness of gradual changes, some residual privilege
Viewpoints less grounded in religious norms or, if believers, egalitarian interpretation Kabasakal Arat and Hasan, 2017; Musawah, 2018; Nazneen, 2018)	✓ weak, moderate, strong religious affiliation; ✓ egalitarian men with strong religious affiliation as role models for other male believers
Taking action if encountering women's social and economic exclusion (Kimmel, 1996; Flood, 2005; Ahmed, 2008, 2014; Pease, 2014)	✓ in private and public domains, weak male breadwinner role or dual earner
Fathers' interest in daughters' wellbeing and participation in reproductive activities (Johansson, 2011; Hanlon, 2012; Ahmed, 2014)	✓ daughter's employment of own choice, 'every opportunity', proud of daughters ✓ to some extent, especially childcare, aware of need to engage more, commitment
Egalitarian views on women's competencies; care, trust, empathy (hooks, 1998; Ahmed, 2008, 2014; Pease, 2014)	✓ employment beneficial for women, benefits of mixed work environment, some residual stereotypes ✓ in public and private relations, including marriage and workplace, support for unrestricted mobility
Democratic manhood involving publicly dismantling stereotypical views about women's and men's roles and positing themselves as women's partners (Kimmel, 1996; hooks, 1998; Flood, 2005; 2007; Pease, 2014; Almassi, 2015)	✓ in public domain depends on roles, not only practical needs but also gender transformative goals ✓ work on gender equality does not exclude men, comparable to global progressive masculinities; source of personal happiness
Potential openness with respect to same-sex relationships (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Jewkes et al., 2015; Hossain, 2017)	✓ non-binary gender identities still rather taboo subject
Aiming for consolidation of positive hegemonic masculinity as a societal norm (Pease, 2014)	✓ optimism about the future, but caution due to various factors and extent of gender inequalities ✓ educated, middle/upper class, NGO employees, age diversity, likely urban experience, 'modernity'

The revised definition of Advocate masculinities is broadly consistent with the methodological definition presented in Section 1.3. Based on the study findings, Advocates reject patriarchal relations between women and men and aspire to a positive hegemonic masculinity as a societal masculinity norm achieved over time. Advocates are aware of positive personal and societal benefits of women's employment and other women's contributions to society. Their involved fatherhood, including strong emotional attachment to their daughters, and (some) engagement in the household manifested in supportive marital relationships. However, some Advocates also exhibit residual patriarchal privilege, including adherence to a primary breadwinner role supported by reproductive work carried out by the wife. The research also encountered Advocates with stronger religious beliefs. In addition, Advocates' openness towards LGBTQ identities may be problematic, particularly for Advocates with a stronger religious background.

10.2.4 Additional points

Based on the findings of this study, Antagonist men tend to have lower education and lower social status, while Ally men include men with primary to graduate education. Advocate men can include men of diverse ages, likely those with at least secondary education, middle/upper class and experience of progressive urban lifestyles. NGO male employees, with awareness on gender equality/women's equality with men, have a high potential to act as Advocates. However, urban residence and university education did not consistently correlate with Advocate masculinities, including NGO workers, while religious background was not a consistent precursor for Antagonist masculinities.

Ally men appear to represent the largest proportion of all male respondents in the field research, supported by the findings of the peer-to-peer survey, which indicated that approximately 55 per cent of the respondents were likely Allies, 31 per cent were likely Antagonists, and 14 per cent Advocates. These findings can be slightly adjusted, depending on a cut-off threshold for each marker. In addition, some male respondents involved in the study through Instruments 1-5 demonstrated masculinity aspects pertaining to more than one masculinity conceptualisation adopted for this research. However, this was observed only across adjacent markers within the masculinity continuum, i.e. across Antagonist-Ally and Ally-Advocate lines.

10.3 Key conclusions of the study

The field research was carried out within the framework of binary masculinities and femininities with respondents demonstrating adherence to compulsory heteronormativity (Irigaray, 1985; Whatling, 1997). Homosexuality and queer identities continue to be a sensitive subject in Bangladesh, and were discussed openly only by one male respondent (Advocate), the most progressive young man amongst all male participants.

Related to the above, various individuals involved in the study, including staff of several non-governmental organisations, habitually referred to ‘gender equality’ – a likely effect of ‘gender’ trainings at these organisations. Given the cultural and legislative context of Bangladesh, gender equality was understood as equality between women and men, without considering other gender identities. To correct this understanding within WEE interventions would require a different set of strategies beyond the scope of this study.

While the research demonstrated close correlation between the understanding of WEE by low-income women and men and the WEE theories outlined in Chapter 3, there were also some significant differences, particularly with respect to understanding the need to address underlying obstacles to women’s economic freedoms (transformative WEE). A particular understanding of WEE has a decisive impact on what objectives and strategies are envisioned for WEE interventions (Rowlands, 1995; Kabeer, 2009; Cornwall, 2016) and what outcome they lead to (Phillips, 2004).

From the methodological point of view, the exploration of masculinities from perspectives of low-income women and men provided interesting insights. These exercises, however, also validated concerns about applying such ‘participatory’ techniques as part of WEE interventions. This refers especially to potential effects of internalised domination/oppression (Rowlands, 1995); false consciousness (Phillips, 2004); discursive construction of views (Foucault, 1977; Chambers, 2006, 2017; Butler, 2007); patriarchal bargain (Kandiyoti, 1988); and women’s ‘power’ conflated with men’s privilege (Guérin, Kumar and Agier; 2013). An analysis of women’s and men’s perspectives collected through ‘participatory’ exercises, without acknowledging gender stereotypes and other biases in such data, can distort WEE transformative objectives.

While acknowledging the author’s adherence to certain universal human rights frameworks, such as the Sustainable Development Goals, two complementary approaches appear useful to engage with low-income men on WEE in Bangladesh: the concept of marital togetherness

based on love, care, empathy and non-conflict relations (hooks, 1998; Ahmed, 2008, 2014; Pease, 2014), and the promotion of egalitarian relations between women and men as part of Islamic norms (Kabasacal Arat and Hasan, 2017; Musawah, 2018; Nazneen, 2009, 2018). These approaches are mutually complementary and can be particularly useful when engaging with Antagonists with strong religious background.

The study field work further underlined a multidimensional nature of WEE. While in this research, three specific dimensions (psychological/personal, social, economic) emerged prominently, there can be others worth exploring; for instance, environmental dimension and political organising (CARE, 2019) as well as those stemming from various approaches to WEE discussed in Chapter 3 (Golla et al., 2011; Kabeer, 2009, 2011; Hunt and Samman, 2016; Jones, 2016; Oxfam, 2017). The three dimensions discussed by the study were closely interconnected in the experience of low-income women and men and highlight the need to approach WEE holistically; that is, beyond a narrow focus on facilitating women's access to income, assets and jobs, as continuously critiqued by a number of feminist scholars (Rowlands, 1995; Chant, 2003, 2016; Kabeer, 1999, 2011, 2015; Cornwall, 2016).

The multidimensionality of WEE incorporates a distinction between men's support to women's *practical* needs and *strategic* interests (Molyneux, 1985; Moser, 1989). Though fulfilling women's practical needs is crucial for women's lives, these are not sufficient to tackle women's structural inequalities with men. Based on the results, men embodying Antagonist and Ally masculinities were much more likely to be supportive of certain practical needs, including women's education and skills-building leading to paid employment (under certain conditions), but they had a tendency to resist systemic changes, where these threatened to undermine men's patriarchal control.

With respect to the masculinity continuum, the study concluded that low-income women overwhelmingly desired Advocate masculinities. This included living in a dual-earner household with women's paid employment facilitated by an involved faithful husband and a father engaged in household work, and who favours joint decision-making. Men demonstrating such progressive masculinities contributed to a peaceful household with mutually caring and trusting relations among household members, particularly evident in the narrations by Advocates (Instruments 4, 5). In the workplace and other public domains, women also preferred men that behaved respectfully with women, were empathetic to women's disadvantages vis-à-vis men, and acted as women's partners and supporters (Instruments 1, 2).

Men demonstrating Ally, and even more so Antagonist, masculinities were largely not able to fulfil such women's aspirations. The results of the life narrations (Instrument 4) and the peer-to-peer survey (Instrument 3) suggested that Antagonist and, to some extent, Ally men were reluctant to give up certain patriarchal privileges in the privacy of their household. Allies demonstrated some support to women's roles in public domains, but this could also be the effect of Minow's paradox (Pease, 2006), masking men's adherence to gender stereotypical norms. Advocate men manifested some residual patriarchal attitudes and practices, but these were marginal in the construction of these masculinities.

While the research uncovered a variety of rationales employed by men grappling with the notion of women's economic capabilities (freedoms), most men, including those exhibiting Antagonist masculinities, were supportive of women's paid work. Antagonist and Ally men supported women's *decent* work opportunities integrating a socio-cultural notions of dignity, respectability and restrictions on mobility associated with women's limited safety in public spaces. In the discourse by the Antagonist and some Ally men (Instruments 1, 4), however, increased women's mobility was strongly correlated with their fear of abandonment by the working socially and economically independent woman. Yet, these men were willing to relax women's mobility restrictions, if women's employment offered attractive remuneration and social recognition. The 'solution' of restricting women's mobility as a result of insecurity of public spaces was rejected by Advocate men (Instruments 1, 3, 4 and 5).

While various examples of social agents eroding 'traditional' femininity and masculinity norms were encountered, the study consistently pointed to a high prevalence of gender stereotypes about women's and men's roles based on biological essentialism and conservative cultural/Islamic norms, held particularly by Antagonists but also Ally men. More specifically, the field results confirmed a persistent domination of the male primary breadwinner norm as a key element of the mainstream male identity in Bangladesh. Advocate men favoured a dual-earner household, although some were the main breadwinners in their families (Instruments 1, 4, 5). Antagonists, and to some extent Allies, perceived themselves as women's 'protectors'; the role associated with disciplining women. While they appeared to reject physical and sexual violence, they may engage in psychological and economic violence against women.

Antagonist and Ally men revealed their insecurity within the society undergoing socio-economic changes, including changes in the roles of women. This insecurity appeared a strong driver of men's patriarchal views, evident particularly in the discourse by Antagonist men

(Instruments 1, 4). Antagonists appealed to their patriarchal ‘right’ to paid employment over women, while perceiving women as ‘competition’. Antagonists and Allies supported women’s *re-traditionalisation* (Chen and Mac an Ghaill, 2017) by, for example, keeping women in home-based employment with restricted mobility, insisting on a conservative dress-code and requiring women to assume overall reproductive responsibility in the household. In that sense, men did not aspire to return to some imagined (Butler, 2007) or maintained immature (Kimmel, 1996) masculinities. They applied reinvented patriarchal norms (Connell, 2005) to confront socio-economic changes undermining their patriarchal masculinities and thus opted for their own re-traditionalisation. Allies’ retraditionalisation was much weaker resulting in Allies’ hybrid masculinities containing both progressive and regressive masculinity norms.

The male development workers from five NGOs largely demonstrated progressive masculinities, consistent with the human rights missions of their organisations. The Advocate managers (Instruments 4, 5) played a crucial role in setting behavioural standards in their workplace and putting forward progressive WEE strategies. The national organisation, led by the progressive Executive Director, appeared to be the most advanced in the thoughtful promotion of Advocate masculinities within its organisational strategies, incorporating the notion of marital co-operation (Ahmed, 2008, 2014) based on love, mutual respect and care in household (hooks, 1998; Pease, 2014). The NGO male workers were also the most optimistic about the prospects of equality between women and men in Bangladesh. On the other hand, the lack of knowledge on systemic and systematic approaches to transformative WEE may inadvertently contribute to reinforcement of some patriarchal gender norms by development staff and organisations.

On a positive note, the study validated that men manifesting Advocate, and to some extent Ally, masculinities were engaged in more emotionally rewarding relationships with their wives as well as with their children and workplace colleagues, than men with Antagonist masculinities in line with strategies proposing masculinity transformation (hooks, 1998; Kimmel, 1996; Connell, 2005; Flood, 2005; Pease, 2014). Sadness, related to an emotionally distant and, sometimes violent, father of their childhood contributed to rejecting such fatherhood models by most men (Instrument 4). The preference for involved fatherhood was supported by the survey results (Instrument 3) and the discussions in men’s focus groups (Instrument 1). Involved husbands and fathers adhering to Advocate masculinities also demonstrated higher propensity to assume household tasks, rewarded by men’s spouses (Instruments 4, 5).

Neither age, nor religious affiliation (Islam) were conclusive factors in driving or resisting patriarchal masculinities. However, the men with a weaker religious background consistently appeared to represent Ally or Advocate masculinities (Instruments 1, 4, 5), while only some men with stronger religious backgrounds were also Advocates (Instrument 4). Concerning disabilities, although it cannot be claimed that this aspect was comprehensively explored in the study, the research provided some evidence that some disabled men experienced heightened emasculation, linked to the erosion of their primary breadwinner responsibility, especially when confronted with other challenges in their lives. This highlights the need for multivariate analysis when studying masculinities. Development actors should also be conscious of linkages between an emasculated disabled husband and women's exposure to violence in public spaces due to perceived lack of women's patriarchal protection, as narrated by female participants of the focus groups (Instrument 1).

The men's empowerment framework (MEF), proposed by this study (Annex 1), is rooted in the context-specific capability approach in which development strategies facilitate enhancement of capabilities/freedoms (Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 2000, 2011; Robeyns, 2003; Charusheela, 2008), incorporating improvement of women's economic rights as part of the social justice agenda, in which women are considered equal citizens and economic actors on par with men (Figure 1.1). The MEF expands the notion of transformative WEE by claiming that men's empowerment must be an integral part of WEE, particularly in communities with heightened patriarchal regimes (Farré, 2011) as those explored by the study.

The study sees commonality with Almassi (2015) proposing *allyship* masculinities as *open-ended feminist approaches to manhood*, although according to the revised masculinity continuum (Section 10.2), to challenge gender inequalities, it is not sufficient to support Ally masculinities, but encourage pro-active Advocate masculinities. Advocate masculinities are not conceptualized as one ideal hegemonic type of masculinity, but as diverse positive masculinity configurations with some common values supporting WEE and women's equality with men more broadly. In addition, the process of men's empowerment does not only seek to increase women's equality with men, but, while it aims to reduce some men's privileges, it also expands men's capabilities and their quality of life. Enhancing men's roles in WEE is thus not sought as a zero-sum game but rather as a win-win solution.

Ultimately, the study challenges the narrative of oppressive Muslim men, who resist normalisation of Bangladeshi women in the economy. The masculinity conceptualisations

(Antagonists, Ally, Advocates) proposed to analyse masculinity linkages with WEE in the context of low-income women's labour in Bangladesh, are not rigid categories. Their ambivalence and fluidity, compounded with men's interest (or curiosity) with respect to women's equality with men, creates a significant impetus for development actors to engage with men on WEE, particularly with respect to Ally men, who appear to be the majority (Section 7.2.1).

The MEF provides one specific avenue to engage diverse men in the quest for women's economic empowerment in Bangladesh (and potentially elsewhere). It is one of many strategies required to close the gap between women and men in the economic sphere, and other crucial areas of gender power imbalances. Nonetheless, the MEF is designed with the expectation that non-static and nuanced understanding of masculinities can encourage useful empowerment strategies that ultimately improve the lives of many women and men.

Section 10.4 further discusses the contribution of the study to advancing theoretical knowledge on the linkages between women's economic empowerment, masculinities and women's labour. It includes recommendations to enhance both development policy and praxis by development actors interested in including masculinities in strategies aiming to strengthen women's economic freedoms.

10.4 Contribution of the study to theory, policy and praxis

10.4.1 Theoretical contribution of the study

The study contributes to feminist scholarship on exploring the concept of women's economic empowerment from the perspective of post-modern transnational feminism and its effort to incorporate local responses to gender inequalities, while at the same time learning from critical men's studies and their investigation of the concept of masculinities. Though the exploration of women's economic empowerment (WEE) is situated in Muslim communities of Bangladesh, the study frames the quest for women's economic equality by broader global (universal) rights efforts, including feminist advocacy for inclusion of women as citizens with equal rights on par with men, encompassed in universal human rights frameworks, including, but not limited to, the Sustainable Development Goals, and their reflection in recent national development plans, such as the Vision 21 in Bangladesh.

WEE is explored as a multidimensional *process*, that contributes to the *transformation* of unequal power relations in private and public domains. The study refutes the narrow focus of WEE on facilitating jobs and incomes for women, and instead highlights that empowerment must seek enhancement of a broader scope of women's freedoms – as one of the main development objectives (Oxfam, 2017). For that reason, the study proposes to incorporate the concept of the masculinity continuum in the analytical framework of WEE. The masculinity continuum involves a multiplicity of masculinity positionings towards WEE in a given context and its existing gender order, underlining heterogeneity of Muslim masculinities. Three specific masculinity markers, introduced by the study (Antagonists, Allies, Advocates), are not conceptualised as rigid and static categories, but as unstable masculinity configurations that can change over time (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Pease, 2014; Jewkes et al., 2015) rejecting the notion of Muslim men as 'cardboard' versions of themselves.

Yet, the value of the study is not just in deconstructing contemporary Muslim masculinities in Bangladesh, but to propose an approach to utilise a nuanced understanding of masculinities in enhancing effectiveness of WEE – the main rationale for the formulation of a *men's empowerment framework* (MEF) and one of the concrete outputs of this study. By doing so, the study underscores a critical contribution of masculinities for advancing women's economic rights within the broader social justice agenda of development strategies, pursued by development actors and other institutions at multiple levels of private and public domains, on which women and men should collaborate. Such collaboration on WEE refutes gender

stereotypes representing men as a problem or a ‘background’ group in women’s struggle for equality and social progress (Cornwall, 1997; Chant and Gutmann, 2002; Connell, 2005; Farré, 2011). Making men visible partners with *co-responsibility* for WEE recognises challenges in current gender relations in Bangladesh but also harnesses men’s potential and existing positive contributions to women’s empowerment within both private and public spheres. In that sense, the study contributes to improving the effectiveness of WEE interventions and supports enhancement of equal socio-economic relations in Bangladesh – one of the goals incorporated in the Vision 2021 and the Sustainable Development Goals.

10.4.2 Policy recommendations for development praxis

With respect to specific policies on promoting WEE within development strategies, it is crucial to continue advocating for a *transformative* definition of WEE (Rowlands, 1995; Cornwall, 2016) in interventions undertaken by various development actors. Such understanding can be strengthened by explicit (contextualised) measurements of WEE (Kabeer, 2011) and making clear distinctions in policies between satisfying women’s *practical* needs and their *strategic* interests, with the understanding that the fulfilment of practical needs will not by itself undermine a patriarchal gender order in multiple areas (Molyneux, 1985; Moser, 1989; Oxfam, 2017). Policies discussing WEE should be mindful of discursive construction of needs/interests by both women and men, and avoid biases inherent in ‘participatory’ approaches to assessing needs/interests and how to address them.

Further distinction should be drawn between the operation of *personal* and *structural* patriarchal systems in particular contexts, although these are closely interlinked (Pease, 2014), including the understanding of how men position themselves within these systems and structures with respect to various aspects relevant for WEE, along the spectrum of the masculinity continuum. In addition, human resources policies by development actors, subscribing to gender equality, should be aware of the operation of Minow’s paradox (Pease, 2006) and potential dissonance between staff members’ personal beliefs and organisational values, particularly front-line staff, as lack of genuine support for WEE undermines its effectiveness. Learning on the multidimensionality of WEE and its diverse benefits for women, family members, broader society, and men themselves can also be integrated in technical training on WEE. Such learning could mobilise male development workers’ activism, inherent in Advocate masculinities encouraged within development organisations.

It is further crucial to consider indigenous discourses on *decent* employment for women within particular contexts. What constitutes decent employment can be understood differently by development staff and low-income women and men in a particular location, given their specific multidimensional positionality. Differences in the views of low-income women and those of men are likely and, among other factors, involve differences in men's positioning within the masculinity continuum. A skilful facilitator would be conscious of these dynamics and guide stakeholders in developing a contextually relevant understanding of women's decent employment, underpinned by existing decent employment frameworks and transformative WEE, such as those promoted by the International Labour Organisation, Fair Trade movement, co-operative enterprise and feminist and humane economics. A better understanding of decent employment by specific stakeholders, potentially with measurable indicators, can facilitate downward and upward *accountability* of development actors with respect to quality of employment opportunities that they facilitate.

As for constrained women's mobility in Bangladesh, this is a long-term, multifaceted and challenging problem. From the perspective of this study, it also requires targeted engagement with Antagonist and Ally men and addressing specific concerns that such men grapple with within cultural and religious normative frameworks. Although some mobility restrictions may be initially inevitable in MEF-informed WEE interventions, WEE is a long-term process and it should be carried out with a long-term (flexible) strategy in place. Such strategy should support creative ways to reduce women's mobility constraints with the goal of expanding women's mobility, given its multiple positive benefits related to women's autonomy.

A substantial part of these efforts should focus on addressing gender-based stereotypes held by Antagonists and Allies resisting women's increased mobility. Identifying strategies involving men in direct prevention of and response to violence can decrease men's frustration with respect to insecurity in public spaces. These masculinity-informed strategies should be coordinated with existing campaigns on improving public safety, for example, those targeting law-enforcement agencies. Development actors may also consider involvement of public and religious schools in learning about respectful male/female relations and engage parents in interventions reducing public harassment by men. It is worth noting that even men with more conservative views supported boys' education on respecting women (Instrument 3) and were against physical and sexual violence in public spaces (Instrument 4).

Two particular strategies, identified by the study as effective ways of engaging with men, deserve more attention in WEE interventions implemented in Bangladesh and similar contexts. These include: the concept of marital togetherness (Ahmed, 2008, 2014) supporting democratic and collaborative masculinities (hooks, 1984, 1998; Kimmel, 1996; Pease, 2014), and egalitarian socio-economic and political relations between women and men in Islam (Kabasacal Arat and Hasan, 2017; Musawah, 2018; Nazneen, 2009, 2018). These approaches seem particularly feasible ways of engagement with low-income Antagonist and Ally men with moderate/strong religious backgrounds. In addition, targeted interventions can enhance low-income women's competencies to strategically deploy arguments to advocate for their needs and interests related to WEE within Islamic normative frameworks. This strategy appeared to be underutilised by women (Instruments 1 and 2).

Concerning alliances for MEF-informed WEE interventions, while there are certainly a number of contentious issues for feminist and secular development advocates to partner with religious authorities (Badran, 2009; Salem, 2013; Mannan, 2015; Zakiuddin, 2015; Kütük-Kuriş, 2019), there are also some common interests that should encourage such partnerships. After all, diverse faith-based development actors have been part of the development community for decades, many willing to adopt commonly pursued strategies based on shared values with secular organisations. Building such broad-based alliances to support women's empowerment (Fox, 2016; Hunt and Samman, 2016) is advocated as a basic prerequisite in enhancing enabling environment for women's economic freedoms (Sholkamy, 2010), particularly in socially conservative contexts (Farré, 2011). Some engagement with *listening* religious authorities is already underway in Bangladesh, supported by the Government of Bangladesh. Coalition-building should involve skilful facilitators able to navigate conflicts stemming from ideological differences between secular and religious stakeholders, particularly with respect to personal and family-related legal aspects. The development actors involved in job creation and sustainable livelihoods programmes should also seek close co-operation with women's rights organisations to strengthen a holistic contextual analysis of structural inequalities affecting women's employment, which would inform the prioritisation of WEE goals and the selection of appropriate strategies. As for Bangladeshi women's organisations, this study advocates for integrating masculinities in addressing women's economic inequalities and women's rights more broadly.

Finally, there appears to be a stronger need to correct misinterpretations of WEE and the promotion of Advocate masculinities as 'Western' impositions. As discussed in Chapter 2,

Bangladesh has a long history of indigenous struggle for women's equality with men. Masculinity-informed WEE is not alien to local 'culture' but stems from this local activism and contextual analyses. Critically, encouraging Advocate masculinities does not mean giving up one's 'culture' (cultures) and religious practices altogether, but to understand the need for distancing from those gendered practices (Pease, 2014; Ratele, 2015; Chen and Mac an Ghaill, 2017) that impede multidimensional and transformative WEE and that can have a negative impact on wellbeing of women and men and society at large. In that context, development actors may need to engage low-income men (and women) in discussions on redefining what cultural (religious, social, etc.) norms and practices are worth preserving and which are incompatible with human rights. Such work should be done within the context of *empowering consientisation* (Fraire, 1970) and *democratic deliberation* (Sen, 1999) requiring adequate time and skills.

10.4.2 Policy recommendations for advancing women's economic rights

Policies impacting women's labour have a potential to enhance the enabling environment for transformative WEE (Hunt and Samman, 2016). Advocating for such policies can be integrated in WEE advocacy and influencing strategies undertaken by development actors. They can concern both women's paid and unpaid work, while also incorporating deeper knowledge on masculinities and their relevance for WEE and addressing private and public patriarchal systems. The recommendations provided in this section are based on this study and primarily relate to the interests of low-income women. Thus, this discussion is not exhaustive, however, it provides some useful recommendations to inform advocacy and influencing interventions by a diversity of development actors.

First, while working with men on behavioural change to assume a higher share of household work at household level, at provincial and national levels, development actors can advocate for public programmes to improve access to community-based services aiming to reduce household burden. These can include, for example, better access to electricity and other energy sources, efficient water systems, communal laundry facilities and other labour saving technologies. Such improvements in public services can be managed through cash-for-work programmes and provide labour opportunities for both women and men. They can be also promoted as part of the mobilisation of Antagonist and Ally men to redistribute reproductive and productive work at household and community levels.

Service provision should also incorporate access to childcare services, as such services play an instrumental role in facilitating women's access to paid employment. Development actors could engage with public authorities on identifying cost-efficient solutions for such services accessible to low-income households, for example, through public-private partnerships. Interventions on increasing access to childcare services should be framed as a *household* need, not a women's need, and be used as an opportunity to encourage men's co-responsibility in managing household burden.

As discussed, the restriction of women's mobility by men is linked to existing or presumed violence against women and girls in public spaces and men's mistrust of women and other men. From a public policy perspective, the efforts focused on attitudinal changes in men's views can be reinforced by promoting urban planning that increases women's safety in public spaces. This can include, for example, public campaigns to mobilise transport providers and general public to respond when witnessing sexual and gender-based violence, in addition to promoting improvement of transport services, such as through managing commuters' crowds and preventing congestion in public transport, which encourages women's harassment. Creating safer urban spaces could also focus on improving lighting in areas where women spend longer periods, for example, while waiting for transport. Social media can be used in information sharing on identified hot spots, perceived particularly dangerous for women (e.g. danger perception maps), which can be shared with law enforcement authorities and municipality authorities.

The improvement of the enabling environment enhancing women's economic capabilities should be rooted in comprehensive labour market strategies aware of women's vertical and horizontal segregation and which seek feasible strategies to address gender inequalities in the labour market, for example, through a more balanced provision of vocational skills for women and girls that goes beyond skills in gender-stereotypical 'traditional' sectors. These should be based on progressive understanding of women's *decent* employment and women's human capital relevant for an inclusive, sustainable and knowledge-based 21st Century economy; complemented by the enforcement of legislation criminalising labour market discrimination, along the lines of strategies promoted in the development sector. Public policies on job creation for women should be based on a multi-stakeholder dialogue to counter-balance instrumentalist approaches to women's employment prioritising poverty reduction and economic growth over women's human rights. In this context, women's rights organisations are a critical stakeholder in such policy dialogues and should be involved at all levels of public policy making.

In addition, while this study advocates an increased focus on creating quality contract-based jobs for low-income women (beyond ready-made garments), public policies on private enterprises should also address gender-based inequalities disadvantaging female low-income entrepreneurs. Given high risks for low-income individual entrepreneurs, family-based, co-operative and social enterprises can create much more feasible and inclusive entrepreneurial options for low-income women. Creating such self-employment opportunities should be aligned with provincial and national labour strategies based on comprehensive gender market analyses, aligned with the national gender-inclusive decent jobs agenda, and awareness raising promoting women's access to management and supervision roles.

Forging co-operative partnerships with Advocates in key arenas of policy and decision-making can facilitate positive outcomes for women envisaged in influencing strategies, while involving Allies and Antagonists in these structures through specific approaches (for more details, see Annex 1: Men's Empowerment Framework, Part 2). Advocates, and to some extent Allies, can be further involved in public campaigns on priority areas of WEE, such as women's equal property rights; including women in secular and religious financial systems; and improving women's social protection during crises (Kabeer, 2009; Hunt and Samman, 2016), such as after a divorce.

Finally, influencing strategies on improving public policies contributing to women's economic capabilities should incorporate interventions that seek to enhance low-income women's collective organising and public representation of their strategic interests and public endorsement of such organising. The strategies can involve not only acquiring skills in advocacy, communication and negotiation by women, but also in supporting the national gender-inclusive labour rights movement beyond the ready-made garment sector. From the perspective of this study, these efforts can also encompass building capacities to identify men's influence with respect to their positioning on the masculinity continuum proposed by this study, and how such understanding of masculinity positionings can shape influencing strategies undertaken by development actors and women's representatives advocating for systemic changes in women's economic inequalities.

10.5 Recommendations for further research

The final section of Chapter 10 considers several themes for further research on the subject of masculinities and their relation to women's economic empowerment (WEE) in Bangladesh. These focus on three specific areas: 1) involvement of public and private actors; 2) disabilities; and 3) masculinities in development practice.

While the study made efforts to consider the operation of masculinities in the framework of private and structural patriarchy, it can be useful to focus the investigation of masculinities specifically within the context of public agencies relevant for WEE in Bangladesh. These could include, for example, specific departments at selected ministries such as the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Labour and Employment, the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, the Ministry of Commerce, and the Ministry of Textiles and Jute. Such a research project could apply the masculinity continuum outlined for this study in Section 10.2 (Antagonist, Ally and Advocate masculinities), in addition to utilising some of the methodology for data collection; specifically, men's focus groups on attitudes to WEE (Instrument 1) and peer-to-peer survey (Instrument 3).

While obtaining consent to conduct research with the participation of public agencies might be challenging in Bangladesh, similar analyses can be more feasible with the involvement of the private sector, for example, with respect to women's inclusion in the financial sector, including Islamic banking. An analysis can be approached from the perspective of a specific value chain to understand the impact of masculinities on women's specific roles, expanding the literature on gender and value chain analysis (Silvander, 2013; Quisumbing et al., 2014; Stoian et.al, 2018; McCarthy, Soundararajan and Taylor, 2020). In addition, a better investigation of masculinities can also be useful for *man-streaming* gender-informed Market System Development (G-MSD) (Jones, 2016), as this dimension is currently considered only marginally in G-MSD. Such pilot intervention can be carried out by a development actor that has already accumulated substantial expertise in G-MSD.

There is a growing body of literature on the intersection of disabilities and masculinities (Shuttleworth, Wedgewood and Wilson, 2012; Goodley and Runswick-Cole, 2013; Barrett, 2014; Loeser, Crowley, and Pini, 2017), however, this theme in Bangladesh is understudied, including with respect to WEE. It could be particularly useful to collect data on disabilities and men's attitudes to WEE by applying a multivariate analysis to examine which factors exacerbate men's socially conservative views (if any). This study provided some evidence of

the correlation between disability and lower socio-economic status caused by the exclusion from desired education and employment, although additional data would be required to corroborate these findings on a broader scale. Such investigation can also utilise the masculinity continuum (Section 10.2) as well as the data collection tools designed for this study.

Finally, despite the growth of academic interest in studying masculinities in recent decades, in the experience of the author as a development practitioner, comprehensive applications of this concept in development practice are rare, including within the promotion of women's economic rights. Thus, it can be useful to examine the scope of the concept's uptake, including by the donors funding WEE interventions in Bangladesh, South Asia or the MENA region. This could be accompanied by investigating barriers to including masculinities in funding policies and implementation practice and providing recommendations for various actors. In this context, the author would be particularly interested to study the usefulness of the Men's Empowerment Framework, proposed by this study, for development praxis, should it be adopted by development actors in future.

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ANNEXES⁴⁵

ANNEX 1: MEN'S EMPOWERMENT FRAMEWORK

Introduction

The Men's Empowerment Framework (MEF) emerged from the study entitled *Deconstructing Cardboard Man: Antagonists, Allies and Advocates in the Quest for Women's Economic Empowerment in Bangladesh* conducted as part of a doctoral programme at the Cork University Business School, University College Cork, Ireland in 2017 – 2021. Its purpose is to encourage development planners to support specific interventions within women's economic empowerment (WEE) programming that would lead to enhancing men's positive roles in WEE, with a particular focus on low-income Muslim communities in Bangladesh, and potentially elsewhere. MEF is not conceptualised as a prescriptive tool but rather guidance for development actors when engaging with men in their diverse roles within WEE interventions. The MEF is presented in three main parts: 1) explanation of the framework; 2) working with Antagonist, Ally and Advocate men; and 3) planning a masculinity-inclusive WEE intervention.

PART 1: Explaining the Men's Empowerment Framework

1.1 The concept of the MEF

The concept of the MEF is based on the notion of the critical importance of including men in WEE interventions, given men's decisive impact on women's economic options encompassing both private and public spheres, particularly in heightened patriarchal contexts such as Bangladesh. At its core, the concept removes men from their marginal and static location within WEE approaches and instead adopts a pro-active strategy based on better understanding of masculinities at play in processes and structures affecting women's economic rights.

In order to understand relations between masculinities, women's labour and WEE, the MEF applies the notion of non-static heterogeneous masculinities, incorporated in three masculinity conceptualisations (Antagonists, Allies, Advocates), and adjusted by contextual specificities. Keeping in mind these conceptualisations are abstract and fluid, they can be used to examine men's specific relations to WEE and subsequently identify how such knowledge can be utilised in addressing certain barriers to WEE at multiple levels (complicity in patriarchy), while, at the same time, benefit from men's positive attitudes, behaviours and practices with respect to WEE in a particular context (resistance to patriarchy). The ultimate goal of the MEF is to assist development planners in identifying more effective – MEF-informed – WEE strategies, which will have positive impacts on not only on women but also men.

⁴⁵ Formats have been adjusted to fit the annexes.

1.2 Proposed principles for applying the MEF in WEE interventions

In order to engage with men effectively, the MEF proposes to adopt several key principles. This is not an exhaustive list of principles, but it provides some minimum standards recommended for including men in WEE interventions. These draw on the existing women's empowerment frameworks, particularly Rowlands (1995); Connell (2005); Pease (2014); Cornwall (2016); Chambers (2017) and Musawah (2018). For ease of understanding, the proposed principles are grouped into three main categories: general, normative and reflection principles.

General principles

1. Complementarity: The MEF-informed WEE interventions should not be conducted at the expense of reducing specific interventions targeting women and opportunities for women's leadership.
2. Multi-level: It is recommended to engage with men at multiple levels to achieve deeper transformative changes. Based on this research, these could include at least household, community / community institutions, market and non-market actors.
3. Contextualisation: The MEF is highly contextual and depends on a particular context of implementation. This is especially relevant when considering specific conceptualisations of masculinities as well as contextual aspects concerning target communities, participating actors and their objectives, as well as existing local, provincial and national systems and structures impacted by international and global arrangements.
4. Transformation: The MEF is proposed to positively contribute to transformative goals of WEE; hence, its inclusion also seeks to change women's structural inequalities with men, not only filling in gaps in accessing assets, jobs and services.
5. Flexibility: The MEF is not envisaged as a rigid prescribed tool, but rather as guidance on how to feasibly engage men in WEE interventions in a given context. For that reason, it should involve sufficient space for reflection and amendment of strategies, if deemed necessary, while being aware that social transformation affecting gender relations and structural aspects of a societal order takes time.
6. Feasibility: Related with the previous point, complexity and time requirements demand adequate planning and commitment of resources. However, the MEF encourages development actors to adopt a critical view of 'cost-benefit' approaches to achieving development goals, particularly when social objectives are addressed.

Normative principles

1. Human rights and development frameworks: the MEF is grounded in human rights and development instruments that promote women's equality with men. Non-formal normative frameworks are also crucial for the MEF but these should be approached with a specific understanding of how they contribute, or conversely hinder, women's equality with men. Policies and legislation that hinder transformative WEE could be a target of advocacy in the MEF-informed WEE (see 8.3.4.7).
2. Locally feasible points of entry: While it is crucial for development actors, including their male and female staff, to understand normative principles related to an MEF-informed WEE to avoid misconceptions of WEE as a 'foreign and imposed' development goal, it is useful to seek locally

acceptable ways of entry to mobilise for an MEF-informed WEE. Though there can be other approaches, based on this research, two approaches appear particularly useful: marital/family togetherness based on love, care, empathy and cooperation (hook, 2003; Ahmed, 2008, 2014; Pease, 2014) and progressive interpretations of the Qur’anic guidance promoting women’s equality with men, peace and religious tolerance (Musawah, 2018; Nazneen, 2018).

3. Genuine empowerment: the MEF stems from the notion of genuine empowerment processes, which, however, does not preclude interventions by development actors guided by normative principles in line with MEF-informed WEE.
4. Positive impact on women and men: As evidenced in Section 8.3.3, although transformative WEE seeks to address women’s inequalities with men, an MEF-informed transformative WEE aims to seek ultimate benefits for both women and men. For that reason, the MEF promotes collaborative partnerships between women and men at multiple levels, while approaching men’s involvement through positive strategies and avoiding man-blaming⁴⁶.
5. Sustainable economic models: the MEF-informed WEE interventions are grounded in sustainable economic models that promote a triple bottom line (economic, social, environmental). These are broadly aligned with other similar approaches, such as the Fair Trade movement, co-operative enterprise, and humane and feminist economics, and adhere to the human rights approach to development.

Reflection principles

1. Avoidance of bias, prejudices and stereotypes: the MEF-informed WEE requires development actors to adopt a reflective approach throughout the entire cycle of a WEE intervention. This includes not only ‘traditional’ approaches to reflection within periodic monitoring and reporting, but creating space for learning and reflection on potential biases, prejudices and stereotypes with respect to femininities and masculinities as well as other operational concepts with implicit power relations, such as household and community, particularly their decision-making mechanisms. Other points for reflection include, for example, power relations within market and non-market institutions and the concepts such as culture, religion, ideology and identity.
2. Conscientisation and agency: It is not sufficient to just ‘sensitise’ men, but increase men’s understanding of diverse ways on how patriarchal power relations affect lives of women and men at multiple levels. This also includes understanding of diverse ways, in which women are complicit in maintaining patriarchy and engage in patriarchal bargain. Informed development actors should also understand that power and agency are discursively constructed concepts that emerge within a complex web of intersecting relations, systems and structures.
3. Reflective individual and organisational praxis: Linked with the above, challenging one’s personal standpoints with respect to certain norms, behaviours and practices should go hand-in-hand with reflection on organisational systems, policies and behaviours that may also contribute to sustaining patriarchy; hence the reference to organisational *praxis*, rather than practice (‘business as usual’).

⁴⁶ This does not refer to overlooking crime committed by men based on an applicable Penal Code.

4. Joyful and lived experience: Men's involvement in transformative WEE should be framed as a positive lived experience, i.e. not a technocratic or abstract exercise in order to mobilise men as a *listening* audience willing to reflect on existing unequal power relations. In highly conservative contexts, and when dealing with Antagonist masculinities, mobilising men for transformative WEE can create multiple challenges. Though there probably always will be men that reject women's equality with men, based on this study, most men demonstrated flexible masculinities and had keen interest in contemplating the concept of 'gender' equality and what it meant for them. This creates space for development actors (individuals and institutions) to engage with men, while seeking interactive and engaging strategies for involving diverse groups of men and individuals in WEE.

1.3 Inclusion of the MEF in WEE interventions

There are various ways for including the MEF in WEE interventions. One obvious point of entry is its inclusion in a gender analysis that is now more commonly conducted either during planning a WEE intervention or at its inception as part of overall market system diagnostics. Conducting a masculinity-inclusive gender analysis explores relevant issues and gender relations from the perspective of both women and men and the persons in charge should be familiar with key and contextualised masculinity theories. It is also recommended to link the analysis with other steps of the MEF, particularly the revision of the masculinity continuum and identification of men using the masculinity continuum (8.3.4.2).

The MEF can be also included in long-term programming, such as within longitudinal microfinance schemes, public employment schemes, market system development programmes or other interventions co-sharing goals with the MEF-informed WEE. There is the possibility of including elements of the MEF in donor strategies; for example, in sections explaining inclusion of women and men in donor-funded interventions or donors' understanding of (inclusive and transformative) WEE, which encourages the MEF-informed WEE interventions by grant applicants. Naturally, the most impactful would be a comprehensive action with an MEF strategy included in an entire multi-year cycle involving a multiplicity of actors. In any case, it is crucial to remember that engaging men in transformative WEE interventions requires time, staff commitment to learning and sufficient levels of flexibility within a project or a programme.

PART 2: Key recommendations for engaging Antagonist, Ally and Advocate men

2.1 Introduction

This section lists key recommendations for engaging Antagonist, Ally and Advocate men within MEF-informed WEE interventions. The application of such engagement strategies may enhance effectiveness of the MEF related actions prioritised by a particular WEE intervention. It provides simple guidance on how to go about identifying challenges to WEE from the perspective of masculinities and opportunities and solutions to address them within MEF-informed WEE interventions.

The recommendations of engagement involve a substantial focus on private patriarchy within the institutions of marriage and family, although some part is also dedicated to men in their public roles. It is crucial to remember that both private and structural patriarchy are closely interconnected within a particular gender order. Importantly, this is not an exhaustive list of recommendations, but rather a flexible ‘menu’ when engaging with diverse men. However, planners should consider that more comprehensive actions are more likely to lead to deeper transformational results. It is also recommended to take some actions only after building positive rapport with men; therefore, the engagement with men should be carried out over an extended period allowing time to build trusting relationships between men and a development actor (and its staff), while linking it with other WEE-related actions that is, one-off stand-alone ‘sensitisation’ sessions are not likely to lead to desired results. Sufficient time is particular needed when engaging with Antagonist men with the strongest resistance to WEE.

As already noted at multiple occasions, men-focused interventions should not be conducted at the expense of specific interventions benefiting women and should avoid overriding women’s leadership by men. At the same time, the presented strategies are not ‘zero-sum’ detrimental for men, but rather seek win-win solutions beneficial in long-run for both women and men and they should be approached as such by development actors.

For ease of understanding, the recommendations are listed in three separate tables. However, this does not necessarily mean dealing with Antagonist, Ally and Advocate men separately. Indeed, interaction between men across three categories could facilitate the MEF-inclusive WEE. The recommendations are provided in relation to specific issues deemed relevant from the vantage point of each masculinity conceptualisation identified by this study.

2.2 Engaging Antagonist men

Theme	Recommendations
1. Opposition to women’s equality with men	1. Challenge men’s stereotypes about and prejudices against women. 2. Be prepared to respond to cultural, religious or biological stereotypical/prejudiced arguments about masculine and feminine roles within private and public spheres in a non-threatening manner.
2. Family/marital happiness	1. Mobilise men to take part in MEF-informed WEE interventions by guiding them to envision a household with reduced conflict and improved relationships with their wife, children and other relatives. 2. Encourage men to contemplate ideal family relationships. 3. Guide men to understand benefits of respectful, caring and empathetic partnerships with women within family and beyond. 4. View specific recommendations concerning involved fatherhood (Theme 13), use of Islamic masculinity norms (Theme 14), and approaches within public institutions (Theme 15-17).
3. Understanding factors contributing to men’s social conservatism	1. Analyse how various factors could have impacted men’s life choices contributing to their social conservatism, such as lack of education, disability, ethnic marginalisation, their upbringing, etc. (including their combinations). 2. Recognise these challenges in your communication with Antagonist men, including empathy with men and avoidance of man-blaming.
4. Male primary breadwinner vs. dual-earner households	1. Discuss with men the reasons for insisting on the role of the primary breadwinner in their families and challenges that it leads to. 2. Discuss benefits of dual-earner households and explain that both women and men can earn income and provide for their families challenging men’s ‘right’ to employment over women. 3. Discuss how a particular family model will impact life of their children. 4. Illustrate concrete examples of men’s experiences through direct meetings, video/movie clips or as a case study of real men.

5. Understanding multiple dimensions of WEE	1. Discuss with men circumstances under which they would be willing to support women's employment and how they can contribute to reducing some challenges to women's decent employment. 2. Guide men to consider a diversity of benefits, beyond income, for example by considering psychological, social and economic dimensions of women's employment. 3. View suggestions on decent jobs (Theme 7), gender division of labour (Theme 9) and addressing violence in public spaces (Theme 10).
6. Addressing stereotypes linked with 'working women'	1. Discuss with men their perceptions of working women while being prepared to challenge their fears of an economically independent woman (likely linked with fear of being abandoned by successful/more independent women, and have their male breadwinner masculinity threatened). 2. Identify role models of (low-income) women that pursued employment as married women with children and discuss their husbands/fathers' attitudes.
7. Promotion of women's (and men's) decent jobs	1. Explain organisational goals regarding promoting decent jobs for both women and men and discuss with men how these are aligned with men's understanding of decent jobs. 2. Settle on feasible principles of decent jobs agreed by men, while guiding men to consider the negative impact of some restrictions. 3. Use a localised understanding of decent work in your strategies (correlated with women's perspectives and those by other actors). 4. View suggestions in Theme 8 and those on gender division of labour (Theme 9) and on addressing violence in public spaces (Theme 10).
8. Women's practical needs and systemic changes promoting WEE	1. Discuss with men obstacles to women's economic involvement, which men can feasibly address or provide support to. 2. Conclude with identification of feasible solutions to obstacles, including those requiring men's participation. 3. Note stereotypes, prejudices and fears men raise and address them either immediately or in the next session. 4. When men gain a basic understanding of prioritised practical needs, link discussions with men's understanding of systemic disadvantages women are facing and how these can be addressed with men's contribution. 5. Be as practical as possible when explaining systemic challenges and avoid jargon. 6. See suggestions regarding controlling behaviour (Theme 12).
9. Gender division of labour	1. Discuss with men task allocation within the household including both productive and reproductive work and rest for both spouses (e.g. by using a tool such as a Daily Activity Clock). 2. Identify what impact this division has on women and men (including girls and boys). 3. Guide men to identify possible changes to the current division of labour, e.g. by using a revised Daily Activity Clock that can be revisited in future. 4. Link this exercise with entertaining activities, such as cooking classes for men or identifying and implementing feasible technical solutions (possibly community-based) to reduce household work burden. 5. See also suggestions on involved fatherhood and childcare (Theme 13).
10. Women's mobility and violence	1. Address stereotypes linked to male and female sexuality (possibly as part of broader reproductive rights work). 2. Discuss with men mistrust of women when meeting non-kin men and how women's seclusion reduces women's social and economic options and personal happiness. 3. Guide men in identifying feasible solutions to reduce men's powerlessness in the face of violence against women in public spaces (e.g. demanding boys' education to respect women in schools, men's intervention when witnessing violence, appealing to local authorities to engage in the issue, joining advocacy to improve street and public transport safety). It must be, however, made clear that the responsibility to deal with public violence rests with law-enforcing agencies, while civil society and men themselves play supporting roles. 4. Support men to propose ideas how they can participate in the interventions addressing violence against women in private and public domains carried out by other civil society and public actors.

11. Peace and happiness in household and violence within household	1. Discuss with men negative impacts of violence on marriage and family by introducing a broader understanding of violence beyond physical and sexual violence, particularly psychological and economic violence at home and workplace. 2. Link it with men's considerations about the life led by their mothers and sisters, and negative impacts it had on them. 3. Introduce progressive masculinities that involve positive emotional connections within family, including referencing Islamic masculinities. 4. Include such sessions as part of psychosocial interventions within community and/or linked with other interventions addressing violence at household level, workplace and other public spaces. 5. Link it with women's skills to engage in diplomatic communication with men and to avoid practices that could be misinterpreted by men and lead to reprisals against women and girls. 6. See suggestions on Islamic value systems (Theme 14).
12. Controlling behaviour	1. Dedicate specific time to discuss demonstrations of men's controlling behaviour towards a wife and children and within the community. 2. Guide men to understand how such behaviour reduces women's personal happiness and also impacts the quality of marriage, familial happiness and tensions within community 3. Discuss ways how men's controlling behaviour impacts women in public domains, including workplace, political representation, and other aspects of society.
13. Involved fatherhood	1. Encourage men to reflect on their childhood and relationships with their fathers and compare it with their own families. 2. Discuss the importance of positive emotional relationships between a father and a child (both male and female) for healthy child development. 3. Link the discussion with challenging stereotypes about childcare being a 'woman's job'. 4. Identify positive behavioural practices that men can adopt, including spending time with a child, providing care, communicating with and listening to a child's concerns. 5. Link involved fatherhood interventions with actions addressing early and forced marriage, the outlawed practice of dowry and other negative social practices through community engagement. 6. Reiterate the message of how restricted opportunities in life, especially of female children, can lead to their unhappiness. 7. Link involved fatherhood with positive Muslim masculinity traits.
14. Engagement within Islamic value systems	1. Mobilise religious representatives willing to discuss women's rights within the nexus of the Islamic doctrine and the national legislation supporting WEE. 2. Organise training by engaging a respected authority as trainers (preferably men), knowledgeable of protectionist as well as socially progressive Islamic interpretations of relationships between men and women in Bangladesh and other Muslim majority countries. 3. Refer to Islamic masculinity values of kindness, co-operation and peace in engaging with male religious representatives, influential community leaders and other community members. 4. Be ready to respond to commonly perpetuated stereotypical arguments about men's control over women (especially cultural, religious, biological). 5. When engaging with women, introduce training on women's communication and negotiations with men (at different levels) by employing religious arguments to advance women's needs and interests.
15. State service providers	1. Count on lower likelihood the men within state agencies would resist WEE openly, but some may hold Antagonist views privately leading to blocking positive public interventions. 2. If Antagonist men hold substantial power and are crucial for a WEE intervention to go ahead, prepare a strategy of individual engagement based on the understanding of Antagonist men's potential prejudicial and stereotypical views. 3. Connect with Antagonist men on personal level and try to first understand their fear and challenges experienced in their lives before challenging their views. 4. If Antagonist men are marginal for an intervention, focus efforts on a likely larger group of Ally men (see 8.3.3.3), which is more cost/time-efficient (e.g. in advocacy for a particular change).

	5. Be prepared to deal with Antagonist men, who try to hijack group dynamics (in a training or other public meetings).
16. Employers and other private market actors	1. Count on potentially higher likelihood of private actors demonstrating their Antagonist views on WEE openly. This does not mean there are more Antagonist men within market actors than in the public sector; they just might feel less pressure to hide their views. 2. Approach them similarly as public sector Antagonist men. 3. Share ethical business standards with the inclusion of gender equality principles and facilitate a dialogue on these as an opportunity to expand economic opportunities.
17. Development actors	1. Know your male staff, who are/would be engaged in MEF-informed WEE interventions and where they stand on the masculinity continuum. 2. While it is less likely, the demonstration of Antagonist masculinities, including in the private domain, should be addressed within internal processes that encourage certain value systems of development workers, e.g. staff codes of conduct, performance reviews and training. 3. Personal values held by staff should be generally consistent with overall organisational value systems, which encompass reflection and revision (see the list of principles suggested to MEF-informed WEE in Section 8.3). 4. Allow space for open discussions with staff, including presenting stereotypical views, but be ready to challenge those. 5. Identify men that Antagonist men respect and admire and who are role models for Advocate masculinities. Facilitate a dialogue with staff using these roles models. 6. Persistent demonstration of Antagonist masculinities (or reports of such behaviour in men's private lives), despite efforts made to encourage staff to reflect and learn, should be a case for staff dismissal (reflected in HR policies).

2.3 Engaging Ally men

Theme	Recommendations
1. Linking support of practical needs with structural women's interests	1. Build on Ally men's support for practical needs by raising understanding of the structural inequalities that women face in private and public domains. 2. Discuss various ways men enjoy patriarchal privilege to the detriment of women. 3. Ensure discussions are conducted in a non-threatening environment, avoiding man-blaming. 4. Lead men to identify concrete ways they could make changes in their household, community and workplace. 5. Establish how these changes can be monitored, preferably by men themselves.
2. Ally men as role models for Antagonist men	1. Engage Ally men in discussions with Antagonist men on harming effects of certain practices controlling women's behaviour and reducing their freedoms. 2. Support Ally men as interlocutors of progressive changes. 3. Use opportunities for Ally men's further learning and engage them in WEE and related interventions.
3. Physical and sexual violence against women and girls	1. Engage Ally men in identifying actions to reduce physical and sexual violence against women and girls in public, including mobilisation of Antagonist men. 2. Discuss negative effects of women's reduced mobility as a 'solution' to public violence, including negative psychological, social and economic consequences for women and girls. 3. Engage trained psychologists to prepare these sessions. 4. Avoid using threatening language when discussing sensitive issues.
4. Economic and psychological violence against women and girls	1. Explain harmful impacts of gender stereotypes about femininities and masculinities in private and public spheres, analysing views, attitudes and behaviours of men. 2. Lead men to identify examples of psychological and economic violence against women and girls in their immediate surroundings. 3. Support men to identify what they specifically can do about violence. 4. Link it with discussions on women's mobility and employment.
5. Women's mobility and trust	1. Support Ally men's mobilising against public violence by enhancing men's trust of women and girls, including discussions with Antagonist men on this issue.

	2. Support inclusion of men in public coalition building against violence and coordinate with other ongoing interventions.
6. Male primary breadwinner vs. dual-earner household model	1. Discuss challenges and benefits of male primary breadwinner and dual-earner household models, including psychological, social and economic impacts on women and men (use a comparative tool to list benefits and challenges for women and men and then discuss differences in both models). 2. Include discussions on masculinity stereotypes regarding a breadwinner role and lead men to reflect why they would feel emasculated, if they could not fulfil this role. 3. Link the above discussions with reflecting on men's views on working women and the basis of their fears of economically active women. 4. Involve a trained psychologist to prepare sessions.
7. Gender division of labour in household and marital/ family happiness	1. Appeal to Ally men's care and love for their spouse and children to start discussions on care and other household tasks division, while linking it with women's paid work. 2. Include reflections and understanding of consequences of gender stereotypes on both women and men. 3. Lead men to identify concrete changes they could make to seek balance with their wife's household burden and ways they can both rest and recuperate, including joint family time. 4. Identify ways to review these changes with men. 5. Link it with the goal of improved quality of men's marriage and family relationships.
8. Involved fatherhood	1. Reflect with men on differences in their parenting style and that of their fathers, and their ambitions regarding their own children's lives. 2. Discuss how certain actions, such as selecting children's spouses or restricting girls' higher education, can lead to potential harm to their children. 3. Lead men to identify positive experiences with their children, including daughters. 4. Introduce the concept of involved father, who cares for their children beyond material provision, giving instructions and insisting on duty and obligations towards parents, and strives to build a rewarding emotional connection with children. 5. Lead men to identify practices they could adopt in line with involved fatherhood and reflect on changes in future. 6. Link such initiatives with other interventions addressing children's wellbeing, including those that involve disabled children.
9. Engagement within Islamic value system	1. Support interventions identified in recommendations for Antagonist men by engaging Ally men and their religious beliefs conducive to women's equal rights. 2. Identify men who would be interested to take part in training provided to religious authorities and community influencers on egalitarian interpretations of Islamic value systems regarding femininities and masculinities and engage them in interventions targeting Antagonist men at different levels.
10. State service providers	1. Engage men in these institutions in addressing stereotypical views regarding women's capabilities, including with respect to women's participation in the labour market and existing horizontal and vertical segregation of women in labour market that leads to poorly remunerated women's jobs with limited progression and influence. 2. Introduce the concept of decent work, review it with men in institutions and identify how it can be addressed compatibly with strategies pursued by each institution. 3. Avoid providing men with 'training', but structure it in formats recognising importance of men's public roles.
11. Employers and other private market actors	1. Engage men in similar learning events as state service providers. 2. Link it with a public campaign and/or specific advocacy issues that you want to pursue as part of your WEE intervention. 3. Include reflections on household models (male breadwinner vs. dual-earner household). 4. Prepare a comprehensive plan of engagement and consult on interactive methodology that is not time-consuming.
12. Development actors	1. As with Antagonist men, know your male staff who is/would be engaged in MEF-informed WEE, where they stand on the masculinity continuum and how this manifests in your organisational practice. 2. Provide opportunities for reflection and learning about prejudiced and stereotypical views regarding women's capabilities that may stem from lack of knowledge and stereotypes acquired through various social spaces.

	3. Provide ample space for men's questions and clarifications by avoiding lecturing and blaming men, particularly when engaging with lower-level male staff. 4. Reflect on changes in attitudes and practices through established internal mechanisms and provide further opportunities for personal growth. 5. Engage Advocate men in supporting learning interventions (internal and external) targeting Ally men provided by your organisation. 6. Share your experience with such learning with local partners and other counterparts.
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2.4 Engaging Advocate men

Theme	Recommendations
1. Leadership on equality of women and men	1. Identify Advocate men early on in MEF-informed WEE interventions at different levels of your action as they can fulfil critical roles in your intervention. 2. Provide men with opportunities to learn and back their, sometimes intuitive, understanding of inequalities by laic and religious arguments. 3. Depending on the level of engagement, focus on practical rather than theoretical learning adjusted to men's realities. 4. Identify concrete ways of engagement in specific advocacy issues (see Theme 3). 5. Be reflective and open about challenges in lengthy transformation processes seeking to challenge patriarchal masculinities. 6. Engage Advocate men on discussing challenges of transformative WEE with Allies.
2. Care and respect for women	1. Identify opportunities for a public acknowledgement of Advocate men's positive attitudes and behaviours that demonstrate respect for dignity, trust, empathy and affection towards women in both public and private relations. 2. Engage Advocate men in incorporating these positive standpoints in boys' upbringing and education, for example in co-operation with local schools.
3. Advocating for women's interests	1. During learning events, use an opportunity to explain differences between women's practical needs and their strategic interests (be as concrete as possible, depending on context). 2. Mobilise men for advocating roles and encourage them to share their experience with Antagonist and Ally men. 3. Be careful to underline that men have co-responsibility with women in shaping gender equality (which is not a static goal) but without reducing women's leadership in advocating for their equality with men as this would be counterproductive and contrary to ethical values associated with MEF-informed WEE interventions. 4. Use opportunities to include Advocate men in other interventions advocating equality between women and men, beyond WEE, such as women's (genuine) political representation.
4. Residual stereotypes	1. Identify residual stereotypes in Advocate men's opinions and actions, which likely stem from lack of understanding rather than intention. 2. Create space to reflect on residual stereotypes in a non-threatening environment. 3. Lead men to identify concrete ways in which stereotypes about femininities and masculinities may be harmful for both women and men and what men can do about them.
5. Residue patriarchal privileges	1. During engagements with Advocate men, note residue patriarchal privileges in men's private and public lives and find ways how to reflect on these. 2. Be aware that some of these cannot be changed (e.g. wife's reproductive roles) 3. In cases where opportunities for changes are limited, support men to realise and understand the root and impact of such patriarchal privilege. 4. Where possible, guide men to identify how to change arrangements in their private and public roles to reduce men's privilege. 5. Be careful to allow time for self-reflection and voluntary, not imposed, changes. 6. Seek opportunities for Advocate men to reflect on these changes with Ally men.
6. Dual-earner household model	1. Acknowledge that some Advocate men may live in a male primary breadwinner household, although they support a dual-earner household model. This was likely caused by their specific circumstances (age, residence, social pressure, labour market composition, etc.).

	2. Distinguish this from Ally men's private arrangement based on their approval of men as primary breadwinners stemming from adherence to patriarchal masculinities. 3. Where possible, engage with men to seek how they can balance economic and reproductive work in their families, including (future) wife's paid work and helping female children to fulfil their potential in the labour market.
7. Gender division of household labour	1. Identify in what ways Advocate men are already engaged in household work and encourage them to share their experience publicly, including with Ally men. 2. Encourage men to identify new ways to balance these responsibilities in their households, including their leadership in potential group/community-based actions that would reduce women's household burden. 3. Seek ways to share such initiatives by men through public media.
8. Involved fatherhood	1. Create space for Advocate men to share publicly their positive fatherhood experiences, including with Ally and Antagonist men, particularly when it concerns female children. 2. Support men to expand care activities involving children by linking men's involvement with positive child development. 3. Identify Advocate men of disabled children, provide them with support to provide adequate care for them and encourage them to share their experiences (including hardship and challenges) publicly.
9. Advocate men in workplace	1. Identify men championing respectful co-operation with women, including when in subordinate positions. 2. Support men in building their communication skills to effectively challenge stereotypical arguments about women's skills and capabilities, including identification of micro-aggressions against women. 3. Engage Advocate men in discussions with Ally and Antagonist men on benefits of gender-mixed work environment and positive impact of paid employment on women, beyond access to independent income.
10. Public violence	1. Engage Advocate men in identifying and leading on solutions reducing risks of violence against women and girls in public spaces, including workplaces. 2. Support men in developing skills to intervene when witnessing violence against women and girls (e.g. learning to distinguish risk of violence, communication and negotiation skills). 3. Engage men in discussions with Ally and Antagonist men on negative impacts of restricting women's mobility and their economic and social exclusion. 4. Link Advocate men with other ongoing interventions seeking to reduce violence in private and public spaces carried out by other actors.
11. Advocate men as role models	1. Use opportunities to publicly reward Advocate men that embody ideals of positive masculinities, including Advocate men with known strong religious background. 2. Create opportunities for men to publicly discuss their views on women's and men's roles in society and in the privacy of home. 3. Support men in identifying ways of public advocacy on women's equality with men, depending on their particular context. 4. Complement such mobilisation by creating opportunities for Advocate men to better understand underlying, structural, obstacles to women's equality with men.
12. National and international human rights and development frameworks	1. Support Advocate men in learning about national and international human rights and development frameworks conducive to enhancing women's equality with men. 2. Create opportunities for provincial, regional and international exchanges of male champions of WEE from different walks of life and public dissemination of their experience, e.g. through traditional and social media; with paying a particular attention to reaching boys and young men outside urban centres.
13. Advocate men with religious background	1. Engage Advocate men with moderate to strong religious background in interventions including religious authorities. 2. Support them with additional training if required by avoiding indoctrination – sufficient space for discussing divergent views is essential. 3. Strive to identify and engage believers outside the main urban centres as these can be more credible when engaging with low-income men.
14. State service providers	1. Identify men with <i>genuine</i> interest to promote women's equality with men in benefiting from public services. 2. Be careful to distinguish them from men that privately hold patriarchal views.

	3. Support men to identify ways that service delivery can improve and publicly reward their efforts, e.g. by inviting them to multi-stakeholder events or running their profile in media. 4. Be ready to provide technical support when challenges are encountered by Advocate men in public institutions, who support your MEF-informed WEE intervention.
15. Employers and other private market actors	1. Adopt similar strategies as in Theme 14. 2. Guide private actors in identifying specific benefits of supporting women's economic inclusion that will enhance their operation. 3. Consider temporal subsidies or other in-kind support. 4. Engage with private actors within Corporate Social Responsibility programmes, as commitments within Fair Trade and Co-operative Enterprise, or similar approaches of businesses seeking a triple bottom line (economic, social, environmental) and sympathetic to multidimensional WEE.
16. Development actors	1. Identify Advocate men in your organisation, who stand out in seeking collaborative partnerships with women in private and public spheres. 2. Engage Advocate staff members in internal and external learning events, particularly with Ally men. 3. Make sure that MEF-informed WEE interventions involve Advocate men, or support suitable Ally men to enhance their Advocate potential. 4. Provide support in additional learning, building skills (e.g. communication) and facilitate experience exchange events with local partners and other development actors on experience with MEF-informed WEE interventions. 5. In 'gender' related training with Advocate men, acknowledge the existence of other gender identities, beyond female and male, and compare legal and societal approaches to LGBTQI in Bangladesh and other countries from human rights' perspectives. You may not have space to pursue the subject, beyond clarifying the concept of 'gender' containing multiple gender identities, given legislative constraints in Bangladesh.

PART 3: Planning a MEF-inclusive WEE intervention

Development actors can follow various pathways in using the MEF in their WEE interventions. Eight recommended steps are presented next. These are not aimed to be prescriptive but rather suggested guidelines.

3.1 Outline of a context-specific definition of transformative WEE

A context-specific definition of transformative WEE should aim to achieve systemic changes leading to enhancing women's equal economic opportunities with men with comparable outcomes for both. It can be based in academic conceptualisations of the WEE concept (Chapter 3), but it is also useful to cross-check it against an intervention-specific context in line with understanding of WEE through freedoms (specific) women have reason to value (Sen, 1999). In addition, WEE should address women's strategic goals that seek to incorporate goals beyond provision for women's immediate needs. Such understanding also includes a broader understanding of WEE that encompasses psychological, social and economic dimensions of WEE.

3.2 Revision of masculinity conceptualisations

The proposed masculinity conceptualisations (Antagonists, Allies and Advocates), that emerged from this study are envisioned as general guidance to facilitate the engagement of development actors with men in their different capacities within WEE interventions. These conceptualisations contain certain common masculinity aspects that were identified through several complementary research methods within a specific time and location (see Chapter 4). However, development actors can apply these masculinity markers only as the foundation for their own conceptualisation of masculinity markers and adapt them in accordance with a specific context. This can be

approached, for example, by a short exploratory study or a survey (e.g. as part of a gender analysis) to cross-examine the key aspects of the three masculinity conceptualisations proposed by this research and co-ordinated with actions identifying Antagonists, Allies and Advocates in an intervention area.

3.3 Understanding of women's decent employment

WEE interventions should support decent employment opportunities for women. Therefore, it is useful to first consult various sources on understanding of the concept of decent jobs, for example, those by the International Labour Organisation, the Fair Trade movement or as envisioned by co-operative principles of entrepreneurship (ICA, 2020), and then contextualise this understanding through involvement of key stakeholders, including local women, women's counterparts, male/female community members, and key institutions. Such contextualisation should not, however, compromise key principles of the decent work concept. It is also recommended to develop intervention-specific dimensions of women's decent employment that would be applied as guidance in facilitating women's employment and livelihoods. Possible dimensions can include the following:

1. Contribution to decreasing women's vertical and horizontal segregation in the labour market/market sector
2. Potential for diversification of women's earning options with the emphasis on non-home-based jobs
3. Employment sustainability
4. Facilitation of women's learning, exposure to new experience and experience-building
5. Potential for co-operation with male counterparts
6. Remuneration comparable to male counterparts
7. Employment that does not harm women's health
8. Employment that supports resilient livelihoods and environmental sustainability
9. Possibility for women's organising and representation of women's interests
10. Employment supporting life and work balance and rest and recuperation
11. Possibility of accessing social protection and/or generating savings
12. Employment contributing to local, provincial and national development goals

3.4 Masculinity diagnostics using the masculinity continuum

Engaging Antagonist, Ally and Advocate men in WEE interventions can be a daunting task. Running simple diagnostics can help identify, prioritise and address certain obstacles stemming from regressive masculinities and their relations to WEE, while also identifying opportunities brought about by positive masculinities. This can be done as a group exercise by involving diverse (but relevant) male and female participants and using a simple diagnostic tool (see 3.7).

Before filling in a diagnostic tool, it is useful to identify a skilful facilitator who is able to maintain the focus of the discussion and is knowledgeable of recommendations for engaging Antagonist, Ally and Advocate men. Group discussions can be guided by a semi-structured list of themes that are worth considering with different stakeholders. Such a list should be flexible and include other relevant themes raised by group members. It is,

however, pertinent to prioritise identified obstacles and opportunities as many can emerge through group interactions, and the volume may appear overwhelming.

Therefore, it should continually be reiterated that transformative processes take time, are not linear and require flexibility and adaptation. It is essential that such participatory processes are conducted with in-depth technical knowledge on challenges associated with women's livelihoods and employment relevant in specific targeted communities and market sector(s). This should also include familiarity with psychological, social and economic dimensions of WEE.

Naturally, some obstacles and opportunities may not be identified by selected stakeholders, given potential biases and gaps in perceiving patriarchal privileges and power structures related to these. The skilful facilitator should be able to guide participants in identifying at least some challenges at the level of personal patriarchy. A development actor should be able to complement the analysis by stakeholders based on technical knowledge of structural challenges.

Examples of relevant themes for masculinity diagnostics include:

1. Women's mobility
2. Violence against women in private and public spaces
3. Household level gender division of labour
4. Men's involvement in care and household work
5. Household and community level labour-saving technologies
6. Male breadwinner and dual earner households
7. Women's management of productive assets
8. Women's freedom to dispose of earned income; investment for growth
9. Women's savings and access to capital
10. Attitudes to women's paid work by men in different levels
11. Stereotypes and prejudices related to women's skills and competencies
12. Women's learning and education; expertise and experience building opportunities
13. Women's use of public and market-based services
14. Safety nets and social protection schemes available to women
15. Women's organising and representation of their needs and interests

A diagnostic tool can be a simple matrix that summarises priority obstacles and opportunities at the level of household, community, market actors and non-market institutions, while considering different attitudes, norms and practices from the perspective of Antagonist, Ally or Advocate masculinities. Obstacles refer to barriers and challenges that are posed at each level from the perspective of Antagonist, Ally or Advocate men with respect to key themes that are perceived relevant, while opportunities can provide guidance for identifying solutions to obstacles that emerged from the analysis with different stakeholders, complemented by a development actor. The proposed levels of reflection correspond with considerations of (interconnected) personal and structural patriarchy that affect WEE. The matrix can be adapted, including the levels of analysis. It is crucial to consider that a more comprehensive analysis is likely to lead to more comprehensive solutions and in turn sustainable results.

Example of matrix identifying obstacles and opportunities:

	<i>Antagonists</i>		<i>Allies</i>		<i>Advocates</i>	
	Obstacle	Opportunity	Obstacle	Opportunity	Obstacle	Opportunity
Households						
Community						
Market actors						
Non-market actors						

3.5 From solutions to an intervention plan

Self-evidently, the diagnostics of obstacles and opportunities should be reflective of the WEE definition adopted for an MEF-informed WEE intervention, in addition to a particular understanding of decent work promoted within intervention strategies, and apply recommendations of engagement with Advocate, Ally and Advocate men provided in Part 2. As noted, the diagnostic tool may generate a large number of problems to be addressed. Therefore, it is essential to prioritise, which of these aspects is relevant and feasible for a particular WEE intervention. Other obstacles/opportunities, not selected for a WEE intervention, may be considered through other complementary and follow-up interventions. Conducting a comprehensive diagnostic exercise is, therefore, not a waste of time.

Once key obstacles/opportunities to WEE from the perspective of the masculinity continuum are identified at each selected level of intervention, this can then provide the basis for discussing specific solutions that an intervention can address. The prioritisation of solutions can be considered from several perspectives; for example, their relevance, feasibility, impact, cost, and opportunity for participatory ground-up action. Naturally, planners should consider in what order they would implement these solutions, while understanding that WEE is not a linear process, but, instead, requires reflection, flexibility and adaptation.

3.6 Measuring outcome and impact

One of the approaches to measuring changes brought about by a MEF-informed WEE intervention is its integration within the overall monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework adopted for a particular intervention based on donor requirements. The drawback of such an approach is the limited scope for integrating specific MEF-related indicators of change and reduced flexibility. Therefore, it can be more useful to include MEF-related measurements within other elements of intervention, such as an action plan following a gender analysis, which would allow more flexibility in terms of indicators and adaptation of MEF strategies in the course of a WEE intervention.

It is, however, useful to develop a structured plan so that concrete MEF commitments can be made and will not remain only rhetoric or generic declarations. In consortium-based MEF-informed WEE interventions, a specific partner can take the lead on coordinating a synergic approach to MEF and be responsible for coordinating MEF-related M&E, while agreeing on *reflexive* and *adaptive* management of such measurement tools.

Further, any development actor with serious commitment to WEE (and gender equality more broadly) should incorporate at least some commitment to measure MEF within its longitudinal (impact level) objectives contributing to organisational, country-based provincial and national as well as international development goals. There are many ways to go about such objectives and measuring their impact. From the perspective of this study, they should be geared towards promoting Advocate masculinities. It is crucial to underline that in current funding possibilities, it is important to have a longer-term (flexible) vision, which will require several coordinated and consecutive interventions to be able to see more robust evidence of the positive transformation of masculinities in a given context. Therefore, M&E plans should have realistic timelines.

3.7 Advocacy, influencing and policy work

The diagnostics discussed in 3.4 may identify certain advocacy, influencing and policy goals, particularly when aiming to address systemic gaps and barriers with respect to market actors and other market and non-market institutions. Such engagement requires sufficient time, resources and skills to achieve any meaningful results. Therefore, it is best approached as a coalition-based intervention (e.g. programme-based consortium, coalition of like-minded development actors, private-public partnership, etc.). It is also likely that there are already ongoing advocacy/influencing actions aiming to achieve similar goals, although these might overlook specific concerns stemming from considering masculinities. Thus, a MEF-informed WEE should primarily seek to establish collaborative partnerships with other actors, while identifying ways to disseminate learning about the relevancy of masculinities for strengthening mutual policy goals.

3.8 Budgeting for a MEF-inclusive WEE intervention

While securing resources for a larger and comprehensive MEF-informed WEE intervention can be challenging, the MEF is broadly consistent with now widespread donor strategies supporting women's equality with men, particularly with respect to women's economic rights. From that perspective, inclusion of the MEF in WEE interventions is not new *per se*. Its contribution is in advocating for the adaptation of current approaches to WEE by promoting systematic and in-depth work with men in their different roles to enhance transformative changes in unequal power relations that should be at the core of WEE interventions. While some exceptional donors might be more open to fund MEF-intensive and explicit interventions, for others, development organisations can adopt a 'mainstreaming' strategy, i.e. include MEF recommendations throughout the project/programme cycle, which may be more acceptable. The level of the understanding of the MEF positive contributions to WEE is, therefore, critical for prioritising these interventions in planning and budget allocation. In addition, it is useful to engage in discussions with donors funding inclusive livelihoods and employment programmes to enhance their understanding of the MEF-inclusive WEE interventions and their relevance in contributing more effectively to national and international development goals, including the Sustainable Development Goals.

ANNEX 2: INDIGENOUS DISCOURSES AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORKS ON WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Academic theories in Chapter 3	Indigenous discourse (Instruments 1a, 1b) ♀: women's FG ♂: men's FG D: Dhaka) K: Kurigram S: Sathkira
Capabilities / freedoms to be and to do what a person has reason to value (Sen, 1999)	♀, ♂
Core capabilities - 1) life; 2) bodily health; 3) bodily integrity; 4) senses, imagination and thought; 5) emotions; 6) practical reason; 7) affiliation; 8) other species; 9) play; 10) control over one's environment (Nussbaum, 2000, 2011)	♀ (life, bodily health, bodily integrity, emotions, practical reason, control over one's environment with respect to safety and protection) ♂ (bodily health, emotions)
Context-specific capabilities (Sen, 1999; Charusheela, 2008; Guérin, Kumar and Agier, 2013)	♀, ♂
Risks of rejecting modernity (Narayan, 1998; Sen, 1999)	♀S, ♂
Gender stereotypes based on biological difference of women and men (essentialism); nurture/culture gender order; sexism; misogyny (De Beauvoir, 1949; Irigaray, 1985; Rubin, 1975, 1984; MacCormack and Strathern, 1980; Butler, 2007; Musawah, 2018)	♀ ♂ (linked with protectionist interpretation of Islam)
Witting's compulsory heteronormativity (Whatling, 1997)	♀, ♂
Post-structural discursively constructed body, sex, power, agency (Foucault, 1977, 1978; Bartky, 1988; Bailey, 1993; Butler, 2007)	♀, ♂
Disciplinary practices subjugating women's bodies and sexuality; patriarchal construction of female body (Foucault, 1978; Rubin, 1984; Bartky, 1988)	♂
Rejection of fixed, essentialist, naturalised female identity; gender fragmentation (MacNay, 1999; Butler, 2007; Chakraborty, 2014; Chen and Mac an Ghaill, 2017)	♀, ♂ (South Asian, low-income femininities and masculinities impacted by diverse variables and shifting context)
Intelligible and acceptable gender manifestations (Butler, 2007)	♀, ♂ (accepted femininity and masculinity, but also resistance)
Gender as doing, not being (performativity); gender as 'act' (Butler, 2007)	♀, ♂
Power over (power as domination); power to and power from within (power of agency) (Rowland, 1995; Guérin, Kumar and Agier, 2013)	♀, ♂- egalitarian men (power to, power from within) ♀D, ♂ (power over – husband, mother-in-law, relatives, men in public spaces)
Classic patriarchy; role of institutions in maintaining patriarchy as opposed to individual prejudice (Kandyoti, 1988; Choudhury 2009; Pease, 2014)	♀, ♂ (marriage, primary male breadwinner, classic femininity and masculinity in care/household work, sexuality, labour market, community (social standing), public protection agencies, religious/cultural norms)
Patriarchal bargain (Kandyoti, 1988)	♀, ♂ (complicity, bargaining, erosion of strict patriarchal femininities and masculinities)
Awareness gained by individuals (Batiwala, 1993); conscientisation, individuals as subjects, not objects, of empowerment (Freire, 1970) or agents (Sen, 1999); individuals with critical consciousness (Rowland, 1995)	♀ ♂ (progressive attitudes and practices)
Internalised oppression and domination as a survival mechanism mistaken for reality (Petherson, 1986; Rowland, 1995; Phillips, 2004)	♀, ♂
Empowerment at personal, close relationships, and collective levels (Rowlands, 1995; Pease, 2014)	♀, ♂ (personal, relational)
Empowerment as conscious transformation of unequal power relations between women and men (Batiwala, 1993; Rowlands, 1995; Sen, 1997; Cornwall, 2016)	Marginal evidence

Emphasis on collective actions, but individual mobilisation for larger-scale transformative political action to address the structural basis of gender inequality (Batliwala, 1994; Rowlands, 1995; Kabeer, 2012; Cornwall, 2016)	No evidence
Power within private spaces (household, relationships) that has political consequences in the framework of free market social reproduction and consumption (Elson, 1998; 2004; 2010; Gamage, Joshi and Rodgers, 2020)	Marginal evidence
Awareness of individual/personal patriarchy (Pease, 2014)	♀, egalitarian ♂
Awareness of structural and institutional patriarchy (Pease, 2014)	♀, egalitarian ♂ (labour market, marriage, family, community, sexual and gender-based violence, lack of protection by state, lack of access to knowledge and information, lack of services beneficial for women, discriminatory religious/cultural norms) ♂ K (unequal pay)
Reinvention of men's privilege in shifting contexts (Connell, 2005; DeSondy, 2013; Chakraborty, 2014; Henry and Powell, 2015; Hughes, 2017; Bhandari, 2019); re-traditionalisation (Chen and Mac an Ghaill, 2017)	♀ ♂ K, S (information/education divide) ♀ K, S; ♂ (reinforcement of male breadwinner, sexual and gender-based violence, seclusion) ♂ D, K (protectionist interpretation of Islam in face of progressive development)
Empowerment as a tool to change the situation of marginalised individuals or groups and a process including a wide variety of actions carried out from the grassroots to global interventions (Rowlands, 1995)	♀, egalitarian ♂ (processes at individual, family, community level only)
Inclusion of actions based on cooperation rather than competition (hooks, 1984; Rowland, 1995; Flood, 2005; Women's Commission for Refugees, 2005; Pease, 2014)	♀, ♂ (cooperation between husband and wife; women's peer support in K; supportive family members)
Women's agency as citizens (Jackson, 2006; Kabeer, 2012)	No evidence
Authentic empowerment (Rowland, 1995; Wallace and Porter, 2013)	♀ D, K (but likely impact of NGOs as well)
Practical gender needs and strategic gender interests (Molyneux, 1985; Moser, 1989) discursively constructed (Rahnema, 1997; Molyneux, 2007) Politics behind stating objectives (Chambers, 2006; Molyneux, 2007)	♀ D, K; ♂ D, K ♀ D, K; ♂ D, K (linked to NGOs)
Power as control over resources (physical, human, intellectual, financial, and the self), and control over ideology (beliefs, values and attitudes) (Batliwala, 1993, 1994; Sen, 1997)	♀ (control of earnings) ♂ D, S (supportive of women's control of physical and financial resources) ♂ (appropriation of women's income, resistance to women's ownership rights)
Oppression of women by other women; women's relationships based on co-existence of solidarity, conflict and competition (Kandiyoti, 1988; Sinha, 2009; Karim, 2011; Guérin, Kumar and Agier, 2013)	♀ K, S (mothers-in-law potentially other conservative female community members)
Women's concern to maintain dignity and respect rather than gain power; discursively constructed notions of respect and dignity (Guérin, Kumar and Agier, 2013; Lipi, 2016)	♀ K, S ♂
Access to power through men, particularly husbands and husbands' standing in family and community (Guérin, Kumar and Agier, 2013)	♀, ♂ (dependency; wealthy women)
Replacement of English terms with local ones (Karim, 2011; Guerin, Kumar and Agier, 2013; Mowles, 2013; Lipi, 2016)	♀, ♂
Women's participation in economic development and its inclusion in the agenda of international development (Boserup, 1970; Elson and Pearson, 1981; Benería, 1995; 2003; Elson, 1998)	♀, ♂ (recognition of women's economic role)
Emphasis on women's location at the intersection between production and reproduction and centrality of gender relations in the nexus between economic growth and human development (Benería, 1995; Palmer, 1995; Elson, 1998; Chant, 2003, 2008; Benería, Berik and Floro, 2015; Kabeer, 2015)	♀, egalitarian ♂
Women's reproductive work crucial for workers' recuperation and nurturing next generation of citizens and workers (Elson, 1998)	Assumed, marginal evidence

Women's reproductive tax as one of key gendered causes of poverty and women's economic exclusion (Hochschild and Machung, 1989; Palmer, 1995; Folbre 2002)	♀, egalitarian ♂
Critique of assumed vulnerability of <i>female</i> -headed households; women in <i>male</i> -headed households assuming a chief bread-winning role (Chant, 2003, 2008)	♀D, K (widowhood, disability)
Women's economic inclusion as smart economics or investment that will pay off (World Bank, 2006)	♀, ♂ (potentially linked with NGOs)
Critique of income-based approach to women's employment; women's economic inclusion as a human right and an end in itself (Batliwala, 1993; Benería, 1995; Rowlands, 1995; Sen, 1997; Elson, 1998, 2004; Kabeer, 2009, 2012; Benería, Berik and Floro, 2015)	♀, ♂ (psychological, social and economic dimensions of empowerment) ♀ D, K; egalitarian ♂
Care work involving personal and emotional dimension resisting commodification (Himmelweit, 1999)	♀ (care for children, mother, disabled husband)
Critique of households as unitary units (Grossbard, 2010); household model with 'cooperative conflict', where household survival requires constant negotiations and bargaining (Sen, 1999, 2001)	♀, egalitarian ♂ (prevalence of male-breadwinner model but preference for dual earner household model; bargaining; cooperation)
Critique of 'altruistic mother' sacrificed for the good of household and children; increase in women's time poverty and stress (Brickell and Chant, 2010)	♀; egalitarian ♂D, S
Hegemonic masculinities; counter-hegemonic masculinities; hybrid masculinities (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, Bridges and Pascoe, 2014)	♀, ♂ (alternative, hybrid masculinities)
Heterogeneity of masculinity performativity (Butler, 2007)	♀, ♂
Negative effects of privileged masculinity; toxic masculine practices; frustrated, poor men (Chant and Gutmann, 2000; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Silberschmidt 2011; Chakraborty, 2014)	♀, ♂ (violence, poverty/cost of living, disability, stress, discrimination at labour market)
The notion of women's 'nimble fingers' in global manufacturing (Elson and Pearson, 1981)	♀, ♂ (reference to garment factories and low-income factory jobs for women)
Exclusion of certain groups, including some women, from benefits of (neo-liberal) global growth (Stiglitz, 2003; Perrons 2004; Benería, Berik and Floro, 2015; Piketty, 2015; Milanovic 2016; Sweetman and Pearson, 2018)	♀, ♂ (labour market characteristics; limited industrialisation in K, S)
Decent employment and ethical business principles (ILO, 2018; ICA, 2020)	♀, ♂ (inclusion of the poor, the marginalised and people with disabilities and their caregivers by NGOs; fair labour conditions, decent work)
Women's inclusion in economic planning to support environmental sustainability (Friends of Earth and C40 Cities, 2018)	No evidence
Women disproportionately affected by climate change and other environmental harms (Dankelman et al., 2008; Tanny and Rahman, 2016; Tanjeela and Rutherford, 2018; Jagnoor et al., 2019)	♀K, S
Women's employment as a means to build skills and increasing human capital (Verick, 2014; Bussemakers et al., 2017)	♀, ♂ (interest in women's education and skill training)
Women's employment as a means to reduce poverty (Acharya, 2008; Bhat, 2011; Kiaušienė, 2015)	♀, ♂
Women's employment as a means to postpone early marriage and lower fertility rates (Budig, 2003; Bongaarts, Mensch and Blanc, 2017; Chari et al., 2017)	No evidence (but ♀S call for legal action against early marriage)
Women's employment as a means to lower control of relatives over women's life and to increase women's agency to make independent decisions (Gaye and Jha, 2011; Pickbourn, 2020)	♀, egalitarian ♂
Women's employment as a means to access a broader range of social and economic opportunities, especially in urban centres; to 'modernise' and to increase desire to consume modern commodities (Pun, 2005)	♀, ♂ (but also fear of urban lifestyles in S)
Priorities in poverty reduction identified discursively, i.e. not objective and as such prone to bias (Rahnema, 1997; Molyneux, 2007; Mowles, 2013)	♀D, K (potential neglect of men's involvement in care work by NGOs; potential lack of transformational strategies in empowerment)
Women's economic activity not a guarantee of transformative empowerment (Salway et al, 2005; Kabeer, 2011; World Bank, 2013; Sweetman and Pearson, 2018)	♀, ♂
Critique of approaches to women's entrepreneurship that only lead to changes in personal agency and in familial life, not broad-based social and political changes (Dolan, Johnstone-Luis and Scott, 2018)	♀D, K
Critique of microfinance and micro-businesses promoted in feminised sectors yielding nominal income and negligible in terms of economic growth (Sinha, 2009; Hanlon,	♀D, K

Barrientos and Hulme, 2010; Karim, 2011; Abdo and Kerbage, 2018; Dolan, Johnstone-Luis and Scott, 2018)	♂ (men's preference for women's stable contractual jobs)
Critique of microfinance – reduced agency, low profitability, instability, high risk, relegation of women's enterprises to marginal sectors (Sinha, 2009; Hanlon, Barrientos and Hulme, 2010; Karim, 2011; Abdo and Kerbage, 2018; Dolan, Johnstone-Luis and Scott, 2018; King, Sintes and Alemu, 2018)	♀ D, S ♂ (men's preference for women's stable contractual jobs)
Critique of the myth of 'natural-born' poor entrepreneurs at the 'bottom of the pyramid' promoted by Prahalad (2005) (Sweetman and Pearson, 2018)	♀ D, K
Acquired gender stereotypes (WEF, 2017; EIGE, 2018; Islam and Asadullah, 2018; OHCHR, 2020)	♂ (gender stereotypes about women's abilities at individual, family, community and institutional levels; protectionist approach to Islamic norms and recommendations)
Horizontal and vertical segregation of women in labour markets; exclusion of women from management positions in business and in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (Penner, 2015; Huyer, 2015, Borrowman and Klasen, 2020).	♀ ♂ (challenges of women's low-paid, insecure jobs in low profit sectors) ♂ S (advocacy for IT skills for women)
Risks of domestic violence, intimate partner violence, and violence in public spaces associated with women's employment; control of women's mobility, her body and sexuality; women's fidelity and purity if unmarried (Bartky, 1988; Anwary, 2015; Biswas, 2017; Mazumder and Pokharel, 2019)	♀, ♂ (private and public spheres)
Paid employment carried out upon husband and/or other relatives' permission; and only when household chores and childcare are taken care of, otherwise risks of violence increase (Kandiyoti, 1998; Palmer, 1995; Kabeer, 1999; Karim, 2011; Asaduzzaman, Kabir and Radovic-Markovic, 2015)	♀, ♂
Specific vulnerabilities with respect to women (Buettgen et al., 2015; UN Women, 2016; World Bank, 2017; UN Habitat, 2018)	♀ K, S (caregivers of people with disabilities, migrant women)
Risks of entanglement of feminist agenda with neoliberal efforts to build a free-market society (Fraser, 2013); 'humane economics in which human needs are prioritised over efficiency and maximisation of economic growth (Benería, 1995)	♀ D, K (economic interventions by NGOs)
Erosion of 'traditional' patriarchal masculinity and women's entry in the labour market (Kandiyoti, 1988; Elson, 1998; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Chowdhury, 2008)	♀, ♂
Resistance to complicity in patriarchal practices and victimization (Chant, 2003, 2008; Butler, 2007; Ratele, 2015)	♀ D, K; egalitarian ♂ (diversity of low-income experience by; women; female breadwinners; women; resistance to violence; care and disability; women's happiness and work; women's potential)
Subaltern, marginalised subjects speak (Spivak, 1988)	♀, ♂
Social agents in transformation (Sen, 1999; Connell and Messerschmitt, 2005; Butler, 2007)	♀ D, K; ♂
Gender and other social markers impacting women's employment (intersectionality), femininity and masculinity (Butler, 2007; Christensen and Jensen, 2014; Kabeer, 2015)	♀, ♂ (poverty, age, wealth, social status, location, environment, health/disability, etc.)
Risks of cultural essentialism and homogeneity (Narayan, 1998; Phillips, 2004) linked to essentialist representation of Muslim men (Ouzgane, 2006; Chakraborty, 2014);	♂ D, K
Contentious relations of feminism and religion (Badran, 2009; Salem, 2013)	♂
Islam and justice; protectionist and egalitarian approaches to Islam with regards to women's freedoms and masculinities (Kabasakal Arat and Hasan, 2017; Musawah, 2018; Nazneen, 2018)	♂
Salient male characteristics in the Qur'an; multiple masculinities; Islamic and Muslim masculinities (Kabaskal Arat and Hasan, 2017)	♂
Giving up patriarchal privilege – on the basis of altruism, certain benefits, stake in feminist futures; men's immediate needs and strategic interests (Flood, 2005; Ferré, 2011; Pease, 2002, 2006, 2014)	Egalitarian ♂
Democratic manhood (Kimmel, 1996)	♀, egalitarian ♂
Marital togetherness (Ahmed, 2008, 2014) underpinned by love and care (hooks, 1998) and empathy (Pease, 2014)	♀, egalitarian ♂

Generational differences in gender norms and attitudes (Hasan, Aggleton and Persson, 2018)	♀D (limited evidence), ♂ (recognition of change in recent decades)
Need for change in attitudes of largely male-dominated governmental, private and non-governmental institutions involved in job creation (Fox, 2016; Hunt and Samman, 2016)	♀ ♂ (in relation to NGOs in D, K and gender stereotypical livelihoods opportunities; limited job creation for low-income women in rural areas; failure of public safety agencies, lack of services)
Need to build broad-based alliances to support women's empowerment (Hunt and Samman, 2016); financing and co-operation with women's rights organisations in achieving gender equality (Arutyunova (2017)	No evidence
Importance of enabling environment to support women's rights related to work, property, safety, voice, sexuality and freedom (Sholkamy, 2010)	♀, ♂ (NGOs, governmental programmes on education and employment, law enforcement, protection of women and girls, access to services in rural areas, etc.)
Need to increase (women's) political representation and organising to advocate for women's equal economic rights (Rowlands, 1995; Kabeer, 2012; Cornwall, 2016)	No evidence
Development actors paternalistic and proscriptive in their approaches inhibiting genuine empowerment processes (Rowlands, 1995; Wallace and Porter, 2013; O'Neil, Domingo and Valters, 2014; Chambers, 2017); donors too rigid and contradictory to locally led, innovative feminist agenda (O'Neil, Domingo and Valters, 2014)	♀ ♂ (potentially with regards to NGOs and donor's practices in the locations of FGDs)
Requirement of commitment to women's empowerment by those who implement them; not 'professional-client' relationships (Rowlands, 1995; Sholkamy, 2011; Cornwall, 2016)	♀, ♂ (evidence of respect and trust of NGOs)

ANNEX 3: INSTRUMENT 1a

INDIGENOUS PERCEPTIONS OF WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT (WOMEN'S FOCUS GROUPS)

1. General guidelines

The local partner contacts selected female participants (see below on the selection process) at least 2 weeks in advance and confirms their attendance 2 days prior to focus group (FG) meeting. If some women are not able to participate, respondents from a back-up list will be contacted. A meeting room should accommodate approximately 10-12 women; the participants face each other in a circular seating arrangement. The selected meeting location should be easily accessible to all women. Preference is given to a closed room to facilitate recording of the session. Check electricity supply (generator). Light refreshments are served during the session (tea, cookies). All women receive a small in-kind incentive (announced during recruitment to encourage attendance). The incentive (e.g. soap, mobile phone card) is given to each woman upon her arrival in the meeting room and registration.

The research team rehearses the script before starting the session – it is essential to be well prepared. A contingency/mitigation plan is discussed prior to each session for unexpected events and disruptions (e.g. some women might bring their young children with them). The research team ensure the key terminology included in the FG glossary [English-Bengali] is used correctly during the session.

During the discussion, the research team follow the guiding questions, but allow for probing questions. The moderator avoids closed-ended and leading questions. Questions should encourage the interaction among women, not with the moderator. All research team members should avoid nodding or any verbal responses (such as 'yes', 'correct'). The atmosphere in the group should be informal and lead to a lively discussion. The moderator maintains eye contact with those who are talking and notices those who want to say something. She facilitates the discussion, encourages women who are quieter, ensures that no one dominates, or several women talk at the same time. The moderator reminds women about the ground rules [referring to flipchart in Bengali].

The moderator leads discussions in Bengali, the researcher takes notes of key opinions [in English] on a flipchart paper as guided by the moderator.

The interpreter/note taker take detailed notes from the discussion (laptop), the researcher notes observations in the Field Journal (handwritten notes).

The researcher and the interpreter sit outside of the circle of women.

Note taking:

- notes are taken in English
- use a heading with date of FG, location, time, names of the research team + partner's staff members
- take clear, concise notes
- important / interesting statements are typed in full (first name of the participant); if statement not captured fully use '...'; complete statement from the recording
- relate comments to each key and probing question
- note if more than one participant had a similar view (by adding 'x' next to the statements)
- note repeated words (use 'x' to count)
- note sounds in brackets, e.g. [laughter]
- use space between speakers and their comments
- in a revised format with completed statements from the recording, use headlines to distinguish between sections of the discussion

- don't note verbal fillers
- number pages in the final notes

Field notes (observation):

- dynamics during the sessions (e.g. interest, reluctance, hostility, etc.); body language
- description of respondents' attitudes towards key questions
- observations that might be relevant for the analysis
- any changes that should be made in the next FG session, including tips for the moderator
- draw a diagram of seating arrangements with names

Props: 2 copies of the terminology glossary, flipchart paper, markers, flipchart with ground rules in Bengali, recorder, notebook, adapter, incentives, consent forms [Bengali], registration forms [English], refreshments.

2. Participants' characteristics

Between 6-8 women are selected from the beneficiary list maintained by partner non-governmental organisations (NGO) with the programmes involving women's economic activities in the location. All women are from households affected by moderate poverty and live in the vicinity.

- Provide selection criteria in writing to a partner NGO and check how selection process is ongoing
- Check the availability / suitability of the meeting room's location
- Check whether time of FG is suitable for the participants

3. Research team training

Moderator (English/Bengali)

- Moderators are recruited from within partners' organisations to reduce the requirements for training.
- Training is provided by the researcher and is focused on the following:
 - o Refresher on moderator's role and key skills
 - o Understanding the key topic of FG and the research focus
 - o Understanding the key questions
 - o Understanding differences between open and closed questions
 - o Discussion on how to avoid leading questions
 - o Practicing posing key questions and probing questions
 - o Discussions on potential challenges and mitigation solutions
 - o Ethics of the research process, including maintaining confidentiality

Interpreter/Note-taker (English/Bengali)

- o Understanding the key topic of FG and the research focus
- o Understanding the key concepts in the terminology glossary
- o Ethics of the research process, including confidentiality
- o Practicing concise and accurate note-taking
- o Practicing consecutive interpretation
- o Practicing a scenario with the moderator and the researcher

4. Schedule during field trips

DAY 1: Arrival, training, rehearsal, final check of the preparation

DAY 2: Instrument 1b (session with men), Instrument 1a (session with women), Instrument 2

DAY 3: Instrument 3 – training, Instrument 4 (TBC in advance), departure

5. Script

Welcome and overview of the topic discussed and the process, ground rules

While women are arriving and sitting down, consent forms are distributed. Interpreter and Moderator assist women to fill out the form while ensuring women understand what they are consenting to. They note those women that have arrived in a registration form. The research team engages in small talk and welcomes everybody. The in-kind incentives are at each participant seat.

Researcher [interpreted in Bengali]: *Thank you for taking time to participate in this meeting. My name is Marcela and I am a PhD student at a university in Ireland. I would like to talk to you today about working women in Bangladesh and what is important for them to be involved in economic activities. This might help me to come up with definitions guiding my work. As I unfortunately do not speak Bengali, my colleagues will help me today.*

We would like to record our meeting (audio recording) so as not to miss any of your valuable comments. There is usually very lively discussion in these meetings and we might not manage to write down everything in our notebooks. Your comments will be used in my doctoral study and possibly in some other publications for academic journals. However, I will not use your real name or your photos. Normally, we use a pseudonym, e.g. instead of 'Maryam', I'll use 'Rahila'.

I would be very grateful if everybody participates and expresses their ideas directly to the entire group. We are hoping to have a lively discussion within a group. The moderator.....will guide the discussion. Please try to speak only one person at a time. I might ask several clarifying questions. But my role and the role of the moderator..... is to listen to your discussion. There are no wrong and right answers. You might have a different opinion so please feel free to speak up. I am sure everybody in the group has interesting ideas. This meeting will be about an hour. We will then continue with another session, which will also last about one hour. Can I also ask you to silence your mobile phones?

I thank you very much for spending some time with me and my team today. There are no formalities, so please help yourselves to some small refreshments that we have prepared for you. I hope you will enjoy our discussion today.

Ice-breaking question [estimated time]

I have prepared a few questions for you that Moderator will discuss with you. Why don't we start by introducing yourselves and tell us what type of economic activity you've been engaged in?

Thank you very much and I now hand over to Moderator.....

Moderator: Three topics & guiding questions [estimate time; stress emphasized words]

1. Needs & Interests

Do you think women in your community want to work and earn money?

Why do you think they want to do that?

What type of work do you think women want? How is this different from men's work?

If more women had paid jobs, what changes would it bring to them personally?

To their families? To society?

2. Agency & Obstacles

How much independence do women have in choosing how to earn money?

Is there something that is stopping women in your community from having a paid job?

Would you say that having more women working outside of their home can also lead to some problems? If so, what kind of problems?

How supportive are husbands (other male relatives) of your work?

3. Actors

What advice would you give to those planning projects supporting women in getting good jobs?

Examples of probing and follow-up questions [Anticipate which can be used]

What does everybody think about this?

How do you feel about this comment?

Can we list these on the flipchart?

How did you feel about that situation?

A number of you agree with Is that correct?

How common is this in your community?

Would you explain that further?

Would you give me an example / positive experience / negative experience?

Why do you think that occurs?

Anyone else wants to comment?

It seems you haven't had a chance to speak yet.

[Keep discussion on track and involve all participants]

Researcher: Debriefing pauses

2-3 breaks, depending on group dynamics. The moderator repeats back some of the opinions; the researcher notes key ideas on a flipchart. The moderator refers to the ideas to move and stimulate the discussion.

Summary of discussion and closing [estimated time]

The moderator together with the researcher summarize the discussion using key ideas noted on flipcharts. The researcher offers some initial interpretation. The moderator / the researcher asks for clarifications and missed information. The summary should be brief (3-5 min) and related to the purpose of the FG.

Moderator:

[summary]

Did we miss anything? Would you agree with this summary?

Researcher [interpreted in Bengali]:

What was the most important thing for you that we discussed today?

...

Thank you all for participating today. I really appreciate it. It was a very useful discussion. We'll take a short break now and we'll continue with our second session shortly.

6. Preparation for Session 2 – Instrument 2

The research team clean the room and rearrange it for the second session with women (see instructions in Instrument 2).

7. Post-FG steps

The research team debrief after the FG meeting, comparing the notes and observations. The interpreter starts working on the transcript. The research team reviews the transcript for accuracy. The researcher proceeds with the analysis. After the 3 FGs, the researcher debriefs with moderators and interpreters. Each interpreter completes notes with the help of recordings (no word-by-word transcript; emphasis only on participants' statements) within 2 days of completing FG. Interpreter's fee is payable upon submission of a comprehensive report that followed the agreed format (see above).

ANNEX 4: INSTRUMENT 1b

INDIGENOUS PERCEPTIONS OF WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT (MEN'S FOCUS GROUPS)

1. General guidelines

The local partner contacts selected male participants (see below on the selection process) at least 2 weeks in advance and confirms their attendance 2 days prior to the focus group (FG) meeting. If some men are not able to participate, male respondents from a back-up list will be contacted. Ideally, the process starts with Instrument 1b - male group, followed by 2 sessions with a women's group - Instrument 1a and Instrument 2. A meeting room should accommodate approximately 10-12 people; men face each other in a circular seating arrangement. The selected meeting location should be easily accessible to all male participants. The preference is given to a closed room to facilitate recording of the session. Check electricity supply (generator). Light refreshments are served during the session (tea, cookies). Men receive a small in-kind incentive (announced during participants' recruitment to encourage their attendance). The incentive (e.g. mobile phone card) is given to each man upon his arrival in the meeting room and registration.

The research team rehearses the script before starting the session – it is essential to be well prepared. A contingency/mitigation plan is discussed prior to each session for unexpected events and disruptions. The research team ensure the key terminology included in the FG glossary [English-Bengali] is used correctly during the session.

During the discussion, the research team follow the guiding questions, but allow for probing questions. The moderator avoids closed-ended and leading questions. Questions should encourage the interaction among the men in the group, not with the moderator. All research team members should avoid nodding or any verbal responses (such as 'yes', 'correct'). The atmosphere in the groups should be informal and lead to a lively discussion. The moderator maintains eye contact with a respondent who is talking and notices those who want to say something. He/she facilitates the discussion, encourages respondents who are quieter, ensures that no one dominates, or several men talk at the same time. The moderator reminds respondents about the ground rules [referring to flipchart in Bengali].

The moderator leads discussions in Bengali and takes notes of key opinions [in English]. The interpreter/note taker take detailed notes of the discussion (laptop), and the researcher notes observations in the Field Journal (handwritten notes).

The researcher and the interpreter sit outside the circle of male participants.

Note taking:

- notes are taken in English
- use a heading with date of FG, time, names of the research team + partner's staff members
- take clear, concise notes
- important / interesting statements are typed in full (first name of the participant); if statement not captured fully use '...'; complete statement from the recording
- relate comments to each key and probing question
- note if more than one participant had a similar view (by adding 'x' next to the statements)
- note repeated words (use 'x' to count)
- note sounds in brackets, e.g. [laughter]
- use space between speakers and their comments

- in a revised format with completed statements from the recording, use headlines to distinguish between sections of the discussion
- don't note verbal fillers
- number pages in the final notes

Field notes (observation):

- dynamics during the sessions (e.g. interest, reluctance, hostility, etc.); body language
- description of respondents' attitudes towards key questions
- observations that might be relevant for the analysis
- any changes that should be made in the next FG session, including tips for the moderator
- draw a diagram of seating arrangements with men's names

Props: 2 copies of the terminology glossary, flipchart paper, markers, flipchart with ground rules in Bengali, recorder, notebook, adapter, incentives, consent forms [Bengali], registration forms [English], refreshments.

1. Participants' characteristics

Between 6-8 men are selected from households participating in programmes carried out by a local partner. Male respondents do not need to be from the same households as female FG participants. All participating men are from households affected by moderate poverty and live in the vicinity.

Tasks:

- Provide selection criteria in writing to a partner NGO
- Check how the selection process is going
- Check the availability / suitability of the meeting room's location
- Check whether time of FG is suitable

2. Research team training

Moderator (English/Bengali)

- Moderators are recruited from within partners' organisations; alternatively, journalists are approached, to reduce the requirements for training.
- Training focuses on:
 - o Refresher on moderator's role and key skills
 - o Understanding the key topic of the FG and the research focus
 - o Understanding the key questions
 - o Understanding differences between open and closed questions
 - o Discussion on how to avoid leading questions
 - o Practicing posing key questions and probing questions
 - o Discussions on potential challenges and mitigation solutions
 - o Ethics of the research process, including confidentiality aspects

Interpreter/Note-taker (English/Bengali)

- o Understanding the key topic of FG and the research focus
- o Understanding the key concepts in the terminology glossary
- o Ethics of the research process, including confidentiality aspects

- Practicing concise and accurate note-taking
- Practicing consecutive interpretation
- Practicing a scenario with the moderator and the researcher

3. Schedule during field trips

DAY 1: Arrival, training, rehearsal, final check of the preparation

DAY 2: Instrument 1b, Instrument 1a, Instrument 2

DAY 3: Instrument 3 – training, Instrument 4 (TBC in advance), departure

4. Script

Welcome and overview of the topic discussed and the process, ground rules

While men are arriving and sitting down, consent forms are distributed. The interpreter and the moderator assist men to fill out the form, while ensuring men understand what they are consenting to. Those participants that have arrived are recorded in a registration form by the research team. The research team engage in small talk and welcomes everybody. The in-kind incentives are at each participant seat.

Researcher [interpreted in Bengali]: *Thank you for taking time to participate in this meeting. My name is Marcela and I am a PhD student at a university in Ireland. I would like to talk to you today about employment in Bangladesh and women's work. As I unfortunately do not speak Bengali, my colleagues will help me today. Before the session, you were given a consent form, so I hope everyone here is participating voluntarily.*

We would like to record our meeting (audio recording) not to miss any of your valuable comments. There is usually very lively discussion in these meetings, and we might not manage to write down everything in our notebooks. Your comments will be used in my doctoral study and possibly in some other publications for academic journals. However, I will not use your real name or your photos. Normally, we use a pseudonym, e.g. instead of 'Tahir', I'll use 'Rafiq'.

I would be very grateful if everybody participates and expresses their ideas directly to the entire group. We are hoping to have a lively discussion within a group. The moderator.....will guide the discussion. Please try to speak to only one person at a time. I might ask several clarifying questions. But my role and the role of the moderator..... is to listen to your discussion. There are no wrong and right answers. You might have a different opinion so please feel free to speak up. I am sure everybody in the group has interesting ideas. Our meeting will be about an hour. Can I also ask you to silence your mobile phones?

I thank you very much for spending some time with me and my team today. There are no formalities, so please help yourselves to some light refreshments that we have prepared for you. I hope you will enjoy our discussion today.

Ice-breaking question [estimated time]

I have prepared a few questions for you that Moderator will discuss with you. Why don't we start with introducing yourselves?

Thank you very much and I now hand over to Moderator.....

Moderator: Guiding questions [estimate time; stress emphasized words]

Do you think women in your community want to work and earn money?

If yes, why do you think they want to do that?

What type of paid work do women do in your community? How is it different from men's paid work?

When women earn money, who should decide how to spend it?

I understand some men do not like when a woman has property in her name. What are the reasons for that?
Have you witnessed any positive or negative changes affecting the family when a woman has a paid job?
What do you think about NGOs doing projects encouraging women to have paid jobs?
What else could be done by NGOs, government or other actors so that women have good paid jobs?

Examples of probing and follow-up questions [Anticipate which can be used]

What does everybody think about this?
How do you feel about this comment?
Can we list these on the flipchart?
How did you feel about that situation?
A number of you agree with Is that correct?
How common is this in your community?
Would you explain that further?
Would you give me an example / positive experience / negative experience?
Why do you think that occurs?
Does anyone else want to comment?
It seems you haven't had a chance to speak yet.

[Keep discussion on track and involve all participants]

Summary of discussion and closing [estimated time]

The moderator together with the researcher summarize the discussion. The researcher offers some initial interpretation. The moderator / the researcher asks for clarifications and missed information. The summary should be brief (3-5 min) and related to the purpose of FG.

Moderator:

[summary]

Did we miss anything? Would you agree with this summary?

Researcher [interpreted in Bengali]:

What was the most important thing for you that we discussed today? ...

Thank you all for participating today. I really appreciate it. It was a very useful discussion.

The researcher personally thanks everybody as the participants are leaving the meeting room.

5. Post-FG steps

The research team debrief after the FG meeting, comparing the notes and observations. The interpreter starts working on the transcript. The research team reviews the transcript for accuracy. The researcher proceeds with the analysis. After the 3 FGs, the researcher debriefs with moderators and interpreters. Each interpreter completes notes with the help of recordings (no word-by-word transcript; emphasis only on participants' statements) within 2 days of completing FG. Interpreter's fee is payable upon submission of a comprehensive report that followed the agreed format (see above).

ANNEX 5: INSTRUMENT 2

VISUALISATION OF IDEAL MANHOOD (WOMEN'S FOCUS GROUPS)

1. General guidelines

Instrument 2 is planned as a follow up meeting to the focus group discussion with women in Instrument 1a. In Instrument 2, women will be working on an image expressing women's expectations from men and their economic involvement, while being encouraged by facilitators to discuss issues related to those expectations – hence, an adapted format of a focus group will be used.

Refreshments for the 2nd session with women are prepared; the meeting room is ventilated. If new women arrive for the meeting, they are given a consent form and an incentive. The registration form is updated.

The research team reviews briefly the script and the roles for the second session. The flipchart with the ground rules for the second session is posted on the wall. The new participants are welcomed.

The interpreter takes notes of what women are talking about (laptop). She does not interfere in the group proceedings. The researcher notes observations in the Field Journal (handwritten notes) and together with the moderator provides guidance to the participants about the process. During the process the researcher (with help of the female moderator) asks guiding and clarifying questions.

Note taking

- notes are taken in English
- note women's first names
- use a heading with date of FG, location, time, names of the research team + partner's staff members
- take clear, concise notes
- important / interesting statements are typed in full (first name of the participant); if not captured fully use '...'; complete statement from the recording
- note if more than one participant had a similar view (by adding 'x' next to the statements)
- note repeated words (use 'x' to count)
- note sounds in brackets, e.g. [laughter]
- use space between speakers and their comments
- in a revised format with completed statements from the recording, use headlines to distinguish between sections of the discussion
- number pages in the final notes

Field notes:

- write women's names at the start of the exercise
- note dynamics during the sessions (e.g. interest, reluctance, hostility, laughter, etc.)
- comment on body language
- note specific descriptions & words used by participants during image making

- note specific imagery used by women
- note observations that might be relevant for the analysis
- note any changes that should be made in the next session

Props: flipchart paper, colourful markers, colourful pictures, magazines, tape, scissors, flipchart with ground rules in Bengali for the 2nd session, recorder, notebook, incentives, consent forms [Bengali], registration form [English], refreshments.

2. Participants' characteristics

Between 6-8 women from the beneficiary list maintained by partner non-governmental organisations (NGO) with the programmes involving women's economic activities in the location. All participants are from households affected by moderate poverty and live in the vicinity. Ideally all women are from the FG (Instrument 1a); but if some not able to stay longer, the partner invites other women (see Instructions in General Guidelines).

Tasks:

- provide selection criteria in writing to a partner NGO
- check how selection process is ongoing
- check the availability / suitability of the meeting room's location
- check whether time of FG is suitable

3. Research team training

Moderator

- Moderators are recruited from within partners' organisations, alternatively journalists are approached, to reduce the requirements for training.
- Training focuses on:
 - o Refresher on moderator's role and key skills
 - o Understanding the exercise and its objectives
 - o Understanding the methodology applied in the exercise
 - o Discussions on potential challenges and mitigation solutions
 - o Ethics of the research process, including confidentiality aspects

Interpreter/Note-taker

- o Understanding the session and its methodology
- o Understanding the role during the exercise
- o Ethics of the research process, including confidentiality aspects
- o Practice note-taking during a simulation exercise

4. Schedule during field trips

DAY 1: Arrival, training, rehearsal, final check of the preparation

DAY 2: Instrument 1b, Instrument 1a, Instrument 2

DAY 3: Instrument 3 – training, Instrument 4 (TBC in advance), departure

5. Script

Welcome and overview of the 2nd session with women, ground rules

Researcher [interpreted in Bengali]: *Thank you for taking time to participate in this meeting. Those that participated in the previous session already know me - my name is Marcela and I am a PhD student at a university in Ireland and I am interested in working women in Bangladesh and what is important for them to be involved in*

economic activities. This session might help me in my research process, especially to understand what support women require from men in their family and community. Before the session, you were given a consent form, so I hope everyone here is participating voluntarily. We will spend together about 1 hour.

We would like to record our meeting (audio recording). There is usually very lively discussion in these meetings, and we might not manage to write down everything in our notebooks. Your comments will be used in my doctoral study and possibly in some other publications for academic journals. However, I will not use your real name or your photos. Normally, we use a pseudonym, e.g. instead of 'Maryam', I'll use 'Rahila'.

In this session we will not only talk but we also play a little – here is flipchart paper, some magazines, pictures, colour pencils, scissors and tape.

What I would like you to do is:

Use this material and make an image depicting an ideal husband / father-in-law or brother that you consider a good Muslim man. Such a man supports your freedom to have a good paid job that you're also enjoy doing. How would such a man be like?

Image making

Women begin working on the image.

The moderator and the researcher assist women in making the image by asking guiding questions.

As the image is emerging, they also ask clarifying questions.

The interpreter takes notes of the discussion among the women.

The researcher takes observation notes.

Examples of guiding and clarifying questions [Anticipate which can be used]:

How would an ideal man look?

How would he behave towards you? Towards others?

How we can we express this idea?

Does everyone agree?

Why do you think this is important/not important?

Description of the image

When the image is ready, the researcher [interpreted in Bengali] asks women to explain the image.

The interpreter notes women's descriptions.

The researcher / moderator asks clarifying questions.

Interpretation of the image

Researcher [interpreted in Bengali]: That was very interesting. Thank you.

How common is this understanding in your community?

What do you think stopping men from being more like this ideal man?

What do you wish changed in your personal lives?

Any other comments?

Closing

The researcher closes the session and thanks everyone for participation.

Researcher [interpreted in Bengali]:

Thank you all for participating today. I really appreciated it. It was a very interesting discussion. I hope you have enjoyed this session.

The research personally thanks everybody as the participants are leaving the meeting room.

6. Post-FG steps

Take a good resolution photo of each image created by the women [to be used in the thesis].

The research team debrief after the FG meeting, comparing notes and observations. The interpreter starts working on the transcript. The research team reviews the transcript for accuracy. The researcher proceeds with the analysis. After the 3 FGs, the researcher debriefs with moderators and interpreters about initial findings. Each interpreter completes notes with the help of recordings – no word-by-word transcript; only key statements are required – within 2 days of completing FG. The interpreter's fee is payable upon submission of a comprehensive report that followed the agreed format (see above).

ANNEX 6: INSTRUMENT 3

PREVALENCE OF MEN'S ATTITUDES ON WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT (PEER-TO-PEER SURVEY WITH MEN)

1. General guidelines

Instrument 3 – a peer-to-peer survey – is an adapted method combining a survey with peer meetings. The survey designed by the researcher is administered by trained male peer researchers in their natural social circle of male friends, male relatives, male acquaintances or colleagues, and is carried out over an extended period of time. All respondents must be over 18 years of age and identify as Muslims.

While going through the survey, the peer researcher engages in an informal conversation with a male respondent; notes key comments made by the respondent as well as his own observations from the process. However, the peer researcher is careful in not leading the respondent in his answers. The survey is anonymised – pseudonyms of peer researchers and respondents will be used. All peer researchers and respondents will be given a consent form (English & Bengali).

Peer-to-peer meetings last approximately 30-45 minutes (no prescribed time is given, however). The survey with questions in English is translated in Bengali and each peer researcher receives a copy to be used with those respondents that do not speak English. The data are either entered in an online survey form or hard copies are submitted to the researcher. The data analysis is carried out by the researcher (see below), however, the peer researchers are debriefed about the results and encouraged to provide their comments.

It is estimated that over the period of 4 months, 10 male peer researchers will collectively conduct at least 120 surveys/meetings with male respondents.

2. Profile of peer researchers

Peer researchers are adult men (18-60 years) from various geographical and socio-economic backgrounds, whose native language is Bengali, and who have a good command of English. The selection process aims to recruit at least 10 peer researchers. These include the researcher's former male colleagues and acquaintances, the majority of whom are from Bangladeshi civil society organisations. Other male peer researchers will be recruited through referrals by peer researchers.

3. Peer researchers' training

Each peer researcher will be trained by the researcher on the following aspects:

- Role of peer researcher
- Process of administering a survey
- Understanding questions
- Engagement with respondents – how to engage but remain neutral
- Ethics of data collection and data entry, including confidentiality aspects
- Data entry
- Debriefing with the researcher; analytical process and data use

4. Survey structure

Introduction [Peer Researcher]: *How are you today? I am currently working as a volunteer in a research studying employment in Bangladesh. The research is managed by a doctoral student at a university in Ireland, Marcela Ondekova. The survey takes about 30-45 minutes to complete but take your time. I will take some notes, if it is ok with you. If you have any questions during the survey, please do not hesitate to ask me. If you have any questions for Ms. Ondekova, I'll pass them on to her and she will respond. As part of the process, you were given a consent form to verify that you participate voluntarily. The survey is anonymous – your name will not appear in the survey or in the analysis of findings. I'll only note some information such as your age, education, profession, etc. Do you have any questions about the process? Shall we begin?*

Date when survey conducted:	Location where survey conducted:	Peer researcher's code:
Respondent's alias:	Respondent's age:	Respondent's completed level of education:
Respondent's residence (select: <i>urban/ rural/peri-urban</i>):	Current marital status (select: <i>single/married/widowed/other</i>):	Employment status (select: <i>student/ unemployed/employed</i>): If employed, add profession:

*Please select only **one option** for each question.*

1. **Boys must receive more support in education and employment than girls as boys are future providers for their family.**
 - a) Strongly agree
 - b) Agree
 - c) Disagree
 - d) Strongly disagree
2. **If my daughter had good results at school, I would like her to continue her studies, even if it meant postponing her marriage.**
 - a) Strongly agree
 - b) Agree
 - c) Disagree
 - d) Strongly disagree
3. **Women's businesses fail because women are not as good in business as men.**
 - a) Strongly agree
 - b) Agree
 - c) Disagree
 - d) Strongly disagree
4. **If my wife or daughter applied for skills development training, I would support them to join.**
 - a) Strongly agree
 - b) Agree
 - c) Disagree
 - d) Strongly disagree
5. **Both girls and boys should be educated about financial management at school.**
 - a) Strongly agree
 - b) Agree
 - c) Disagree
 - d) Strongly disagree
6. **It is good for our society that women nowadays want to work and have a life outside of the home equally as men.**
 - a) Strongly agree
 - b) Agree
 - c) Disagree
 - d) Strongly disagree

7. **A good wife never goes anywhere without her husband's approval.**
 - a) Strongly agree
 - b) Agree
 - c) Disagree
 - d) Strongly disagree
8. **If my wife did paid work, I would prefer if she did this in the home because it is not appropriate for her to travel alone.**
 - a) Strongly agree
 - b) Agree
 - c) Disagree
 - d) Strongly disagree
9. **Men do not want women to leave their house because they do not trust women.**
 - a) Strongly agree
 - b) Agree
 - c) Disagree
 - d) Strongly disagree
10. **Men do not want women to leave their house because they do not trust other men.**
 - a) Strongly agree
 - b) Agree
 - c) Disagree
 - d) Strongly disagree
11. **A father should approve of his daughter's job because it is his duty as a father to protect her honour.**
 - a) Strongly agree
 - b) Agree
 - c) Disagree
 - d) Strongly disagree
12. **Women with careers neglect their husbands and children.**
 - a) Strongly agree
 - b) Agree
 - c) Disagree
 - d) Strongly disagree
13. **If my wife had a good job, our family would be richer.**
 - a) Strongly agree
 - b) Agree
 - c) Disagree
 - d) Strongly disagree
14. **I believe men must spend more time on childcare and household work allowing women to have well-paid jobs.**
 - a) Strongly agree
 - b) Agree
 - c) Disagree
 - d) Strongly disagree
15. **It is suspicious when a married woman demands to have ownership of property in her own name.**
 - a) Strongly agree
 - b) Agree
 - c) Disagree
 - d) Strongly disagree
16. **Without a husband's or a father's control, women spend money excessively.**
 - a) Strongly agree
 - b) Agree

- c) Disagree
 - d) Strongly disagree
- 17. It is inappropriate for a married woman to have her personal bank account.**
- a) Strongly agree
 - b) Agree
 - c) Disagree
 - d) Strongly disagree
- 18. In our society, women and men do not have equal work opportunities because women face more obstacles than men.**
- a) Strongly agree
 - b) Agree
 - c) Disagree
 - d) Strongly disagree
- 19. Some jobs are only suitable for men and not for women.**
- a) Strongly agree
 - b) Agree
 - c) Disagree
 - d) Strongly disagree
- 20. Men who do women's work in the house are not real men.**
- a) Strongly agree
 - b) Agree
 - c) Disagree
 - d) Strongly disagree
- 21. A wife who neglects the household and children because of her employment should be disciplined by her husband.**
- a) Strongly agree
 - b) Agree
 - c) Disagree
 - d) Strongly disagree
- 22. Women do not respect a man who earns less money than them.**
- a) Strongly agree
 - b) Agree
 - c) Disagree
 - d) Strongly disagree
- 23. Men are belittled when they must be supervised by a woman in the work place.**
- a) Strongly agree
 - b) Agree
 - c) Disagree
 - d) Strongly disagree
- 24. Women cannot be good leaders as they often get too emotional.**
- a) Strongly agree
 - b) Agree
 - c) Disagree
 - d) Strongly disagree
- 25. Women have too much freedom these days.**
- a) Strongly agree
 - b) Agree
 - c) Disagree
 - d) Strongly disagree

26. **A woman that brings shame to her father or husband must be punished.**
- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
27. **It is my duty to intervene when I see another man mistreating his wife or children.**
- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
28. **My wife's and daughter's happiness is more important than what people in my family or community say about me.**
- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
29. **I think it is important to teach boys to respect women.**
- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
30. **Ensuring equal rights for women and men are also men's responsibility.**
- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree

COMMENTS

Respondents' comments	
Observation notes by peer researcher	

5. Coding

Q1	A 0	B 1	C 2	D 3
Q2	A 3	B 2	C 1	D 0
Q3	A 0	B 1	C 2	D 3
Q4	A 3	B 2	C 1	D 0
Q5	A 3	B 2	C 1	D 0
Q6	A 3	B 2	C 1	D 0
Q7	A 0	B 1	C 2	D 3

Q8	A 0	B 1	C 2	D 3
Q9	A 0	B 1	C 2	D 3
Q10	A 0	B 1	C 2	D 3
Q11	A 0	B 1	C 2	D 3
Q12	A 0	B 1	C 2	D 3
Q13	A 3	B 2	C 1	D 0
Q14	A 3	B 2	C 1	D 0
Q15	A 0	B 1	C 2	D 3
Q16	A 0	B 1	C 2	D 3
Q17	A 0	B 1	C 2	D 3
Q18	A 3	B 2	C 1	D 0
Q19	A 0	B 1	C 2	D 3
Q20	A 0	B 1	C 2	D 3
Q 21	A 0	B 1	C 2	D 3
Q22	A 0	B 1	C 2	D 3
Q23	A 0	B 1	C 2	D 3
Q24	A 0	B 1	C 2	D 3
Q25	A 0	B 1	C 2	D 3
Q26	A 0	B 1	C 2	D 3
Q27	A 3	B 2	C 1	D 0
Q28	A 3	B 2	C 1	D 0
Q29	A 3	B 2	C 1	D 0
Q30	A 3	B 2	C 1	D 0

ANNEX 7: INSTRUMENT 4

CONSTRUCTION OF MANHOOD WITH RESPECT TO WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT (MEN'S LIFE HISTORIES)

1. General guidelines

Instrument 4 – life histories – is a participatory method involving a semi-structured narration aiming to produce temporal accounts of men's lives, their memories and its interpretation. It differs from semi-structured interviewing in allowing wider space to the narrator to present his own account of his life. The researcher is an active listener and through conversation encourages the narrator to explore and interpret particular events, experiences and opinions. The final product is a result of the interaction between the narrator and the researcher – the transcript is both narrative and co-constructed. For the success of the process, it is critical to maintain professional and personal integrity and establish a respectful, safe and trustworthy relationship with the narrator. Such a relationship is not exploitative and will not lead to any harm, physical or psychological.

Meetings with purposely selected male narrators follow a loose script with pre-defined questions. Each meeting lasts between 60 and 120 minutes; additional meetings may be arranged. Prior to a meeting, the narrator is asked to bring some personal mementos, including, photos, school records, letters, news clippings, etc., to help with the narration and the triangulation of the information provided through the narration. The meetings are conducted in English or Bengali and are audio-recorded. Meetings in Bengali are interpreted by a trained interpreter (male). Participants choose a location for the meeting, normally within social space familiar to a participant. It is important to make sure a meeting can be audio-recorded and there is limited background noise. Findings and names of respondents are anonymised. Each participant will be provided with a consent form prior to the meeting and the methodology explained in detail to ensure the narrator is clear what he consents to.

Process:

- Identification of volunteer participants based on pre-defined criteria
- Schedule of meetings with respondents
- Establishment of trust and responsibility between the narrator and the researcher
- Oral accounts of the narrator's life narrated by himself
- Researchers' questions to explore particular views
- Complementary information (use of personal mementos, additional interviews, etc. to corroborate the narrator's story)
- Comparison with secondary data & other participants
- Preliminary findings
- Review by the participant of how he is represented by the researcher's interpretation (verification of findings)
- Final findings

2. Profile of respondents and selection criteria

Participants are over 18 years of age and identify as Muslims. They are recruited as volunteers. In case of low responsiveness, a small incentive is offered to increase the motivation to sign up for the research. The research sample includes four broad categories of respondents: 1) those representing a younger generation (18-24 y); 2) adult mainstream men (25+y); 3) men working in development institutions; and 4) men representing 'alternative voices'.

The selection of 'men in institutions' focuses on senior to middle management positions in international and local non-governmental organisations, donor and multinational agencies, national authorities or other civil society representatives. The selection is restricted to Bangladeshi nationals. Representation of alternative male voices primarily relates to sexuality, disability, displacement, and lifestyle (demonstrated, for example, through 'alternative' physical embodiments and interests).

The selection process is carried in the course of 4-5 months and is mindful of including a variety of men across the masculinity spectrum adapted for this study.

Respondents are identified through several approaches: 1) from within the group of peer researchers (Instrument 3); 2) referrals by peer researchers; 3) advertising in locations visited by men (e.g. cafes). The selection process aims to include men with a diversity of educational background/wealth ranking and location. A profile of a respondent including key biographical data is prepared prior to the meeting with the researcher.

3. Translator's training [narrations in Bengali]

- Understanding the life history methodology
- Ethics of the research process, including confidentiality aspects
- Practicing narration scenarios
- Practicing note-taking

4. Recording, note taking & observation notes

Each session is audio-recorded and partially transcribed in English focusing on key statements. Narrations in Bengali are translated in English from audio-recording. The researcher takes content-related notes as well as field observations of the following:

Notes:

- notes are taken in English [handwritten notes taken during a meeting are computerized afterwards]
- use a heading with date of a meeting, location, names of the research team members
- take clear, concise notes
- important / interesting statements are typed in full (first name of the participant); if statement not captured fully use '...'; complete statement from the recording
- note repeated words (use 'x' to count)
- note sounds in brackets, e.g. [laughter]
- use space between new segments
- in a revised format with completed statements from the recording, use headlines to distinguish between sections
- don't note verbal fillers
- number pages in the final notes

Field notes (observation):

- dynamics of the meeting, respondent's body language
- description of a respondent's attitudes towards questions
- observations that might be relevant for the analysis
- any changes that should be made in the next session

5. Script

Introduction:

Researcher [translated in Bengali, if required]: *Thank you for participating in this meeting. My name is Marcela and I am a doctoral student at a university in Ireland and I am studying employment issues in Bangladesh. I would like to talk to you today about your personal experience of growing up in Bangladesh. Your experience and opinions would be very useful for my research. The way these interviews normally work is that we talk about your life, from your earlier memories up to the present. I have some questions for you to help our conversation. Feel free to ask me any clarifying questions during our talk. I hope you'll find it interesting.*

We will audio-record our meeting as it is difficult to capture everything accurately. However, I will not use your name in any published write-up of my findings. Before the session you received a consent form, so I hope you are participating voluntarily. We will partially transcribe our conversation so you can also have a look at it later, if you wish.

We will try to keep our session to around one hour but there is no rush.

[Sessions in Bengali]: As I do not speak Bengali, my colleague.....will help me today. He's been also trained and has signed an agreement to ensure strict confidentiality of this process.

Thank you again for taking time to talk to me.

Let's begin.

Guiding questions:

1. *What do you think has made you the man that you are today? What is important in your life?*
2. *Tell me about your childhood. How was your relationship with your father?*
3. *Did you have any male role models when growing up? Who did you admire? Why?*
4. *Was there any influential female figure in your life when growing up? Tell me about her.*
5. *What kind of a student were you? How would your teachers describe you?*
6. *Did you have any female friends when at school? Tell me about them.*
7. *Tell me about your working life. What has been your experience working with women (supervisors, colleagues, subordinates)?*
8. *Have you at some point of your life felt unfairly treated as a man? What happened?*
9. *If you think about your wife (sister, other close female), in what way has her personal and working life been different to yours? Tell me more about it.*
10. *Do you think that media (including social media) today depict men in Bangladesh mostly negatively or mostly positively? Why do you think that?*
11. *How do you imagine your daughter's life will be different from your wife's life (sister's, other close female) when she grows up?*
12. *Do you think you are [will be] a different husband and a father than your father? In what way?*
13. *What kind of a man do you want [would you want] your son to be in his relationships with women?*

ANNEX 8: INSTRUMENT 5

MEN'S PERSPECTIVES ON WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT STRATEGIES AND EGALITARIAN GENDER NORMS (INTERVIEWS WITH MEN FROM INSTITUTIONS)

1. General guidelines

Instrument 5 is carried out in conjunction with Instrument 4 (selected participants representing “Men in Institutions”). Its aim is to document and analyse men’s perspectives on women’s economic empowerment strategies and their implementation. The analysis of the findings is conducted by applying a human rights perspective on women’s economic empowerment within the context of national and international policies and legal frameworks relevant for the analysis. The analysis aims to select at least one male development worker in 4 development institutions, including at least one institution with the head office outside the capital, Dhaka. Structured interviews will target organisational senior managers and technical personnel.

2. Themes covered by interviews

1. Transformational notion of WEE and the use of definition with measurable results.
2. Differences in women and girls’ immediate needs and long-term strategic interests, i.e. programmes not limited to ‘service delivery’ of women’s immediate needs.
3. Incorporation of masculinities and men’s roles in gender equality.
4. Generation of ‘decent’ and ‘sustainable’ jobs for women, with social and economic security, allowing work and life balance, and offering ‘liveable’ wages, comparable to those earned by male counterparts.
5. Vertical and horizontal segregation of women’s labour, and sectors with limited growth potential.
6. Women’s agency, freedoms, and leadership roles.
7. Women’s ownership rights.
8. Actions supporting women’s economic empowerment, including, but not limited to, addressing gender stereotypes; addressing unequal household & care division of labour; addressing direct & indirect labour institutional, legal dimensions).
9. Gender disaggregated data and information is incorporated in the monitoring and evaluation of women’s economic empowerment projects (outcomes & impact levels).
10. Women’s inclusion in design & implementation of activities.
11. Systematic documentation of good practices on women’s economic empowerment and their dissemination.
12. Budgeting on women’s economic empowerment programming and inclusion of men in gender equality.
13. Organisational gender policy
14. Organisational culture with respect to gender equality.
15. Leadership on and commitment to organisational gender transformational goals.

3. Data collection process

Data collection will be carried out primarily through structured interviews complemented by secondary sources, including organigrams and personnel audit; organisational policies; project documentation (proposals, progress reports, final evaluations, budgets, etc.) and external communication and publications by organisation.

ANNEX 9: INSTRUMENT 6

FEEDBACK ON A MEN'S EMPOWERMENT FRAMEWORK (DELPHI METHOD)

1. General guidelines

Instrument 6 is carried out in the final stage of the data collection process. The process involves several steps:

- identification of and agreements with panel members on their role (voluntary basis);
- after processing research data, the researcher prepares an initial outline of a men's empowerment framework and shares it with the panel members;
- the framework is commented on individually by the panel members (email and skype conversation); and
- finalisation of the framework.

The process is flexible with regards to panel members' locations and timing of their response (a broader time-frame is, however, followed). Questions and answers (Q&A) are delivered individually, reducing biases stemming from conformity to majoritarian opinions. It is envisioned that at least four rounds of Q&A are required to complete the design of the framework.

2. Participants

The panel members include 6 men and women (4 men/2 women) and are selected based on their expertise (development professionals, authorities, activists) and the potential to contribute to the formulation of a men's empowerment framework applied to women's economic empowerment strategies. Preference is given to there being at least 4 panel members from Bangladesh.

3. Scope

The empowerment framework will identify:

- Rationale and objectives of men's involvement
- Men's roles
- Dimensions of men's support (from grass-roots to national levels)
- Criteria and conditions for men's involvement
- Transformational indicators
- Mechanisms to measure change

4. Final output

The framework will use a user-friendly format and accessible language, including definition of key concepts.