



As a man this is how you should behave! A critical look into methods of 'developing men' as a means of HIV/AIDS prevention in sub-Saharan Africa

**Louise Nygaard Rasmussen
Centre of African Studies,
University of Copenhagen**

In recent years, targeting men in HIV/AIDS prevention has been promoted as a promising solution for preventing the spread of HIV. The reasons for targeting men revolve around how the sexual behaviour and attitudes of men are key drivers of the epidemic, and that empowering women is not sufficient to change men's behaviours and attitudes. It is therefore considered crucial to involve men in the fight against risky sexual practices. Constructing men as both the problem of and the solution to AIDS seems to suggest that in order to significantly address problematic sexual practices men have to use their power differently. Building on extensive research on two HIV/AIDS preventions programmes in Uganda the paper demonstrates that both programmes are based upon a form of knowledge about 'Ugandan culture', which uncritically assumes that all Ugandan men are in a dominant position within their households. Hence, the key concern with targeting men in these programmes becomes a question of teaching Ugandan men how to practice their authority as men 'properly'. Overall, the paper argues that these two particular practices of HIV/AIDS prevention contribute to reproduce stereotypical ideas about African men as the ones in control and that reproducing such gendered stereotypes may help to naturalise unequal gender relations in sub-Saharan Africa.

Introduction*

As HIV/AIDS has continued to spread in most of sub-Saharan Africa despite international, national and local efforts to stop the epidemic the question of HIV prevention remains a key concern in international discourses on AIDS in Africa. The ideas, positions and rationales about what has gone wrong with previous approaches and how to re-think about HIV prevention in Africa are diverse and often conflicting (e.g. Heald 2002; Green 2003; Stillwaggon 2006). Consequently, it can hardly be claimed that the international health community unanimously agrees on how to target the epidemic. Nevertheless, some commonalities can be identified between international organisations, 'the bilateral aid arms, the NGOs and the development research institutions' (Jassey and Nyanzi 2007: 13). One recent idea which has gained influence across different positions is the idea that men must be targeted in HIV/AIDS prevention (e.g. Obbo 1993; Panos 1998; UNAIDS 2000; Barker 2000; Silberschmidt 2001 and 2005; Bujra 2002; Peacock and Leavak 2004; UAC 2005b; USAID 2005). A joint publication from the Panos Institute and UNAIDS concludes that 'with the 2000/2001 World AIDS Campaign [called Men make a difference] it is now fairly well known that the behaviour and attitudes of men of all ages drive the epidemic' (Panos and UNAIDS 2001: 3), and perhaps more importantly that the 'time is ripe to start seeing men not as some kind of problem, but as part of the solution' (UNAIDS 2000: 6).

The need to target men appear to be inscribed into more general trends in the international discourses on AIDS. First, they build on one of the most dominant truths in the discourses on AIDS; that 'sexual behaviour is the most important factor influencing the spread of HIV in Africa' (UNAIDS 2002: 25), and therefore that the key problem to be addressed is 'risky sexual behaviour'. It may appear

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self-evident that sexual behaviours constitutes a key focus in discourses and practices on AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa, since the HIV virus can be transmitted through sexual contact. However, other, and largely silenced, forms of knowledge about AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa suggest that poverty, underdevelopment, malnutrition, unsafe blood transfusions and medical procedures or parasite infections are equally important factors in accounting for the spread of the virus (Stillwaggon 2006; Oppong and Kalipeni 2004; Shoepf 2004: 20; Jassey and Nyanzi 2007: 32). Stillwaggon's (2006) account of how the processes of underdevelopment have contributed to produce biological co-factors to HIV transmission in sub-Saharan Africa is particularly illuminating for understanding that when the international health community assumes that sexual behaviour is the key problem of African AIDS it reflects the politics of a very particular truth. In the various discourses on African AIDS, the more precise definition of risky sexual behaviour and the question of how to address certain sexual practices remain contested. However, one overarching strategy seems to have gained a rather stable position in policy discussions; this strategy is based on the assessment of so-called 'underlying factors' to the spread of the virus (e.g. UNAIDS 2004b: 17; USAID 2005; Danida 2005; Villafana 2001). The rationale of this strategy is that one has to understand sexual behaviour in its specific social contexts, before sexual practices involving risk of HIV infection can be comprehensively addressed (e.g. Craddock, 2004; Shoepf 2004a; Silberschmidt 2004). Amongst the various underlying factors gender relations have been widely discussed in the context of African AIDS (e.g. McFadden 1992; Baylies and Bujra 2000; Campbell 2003; UNAIDS 2004a; Shoepf, 2004b; Danida 2005). The discussions in academic and policy debates have mostly focused on how unequal gender relations make it necessary to empower African women in order to enable them to negotiate the terms of sexual relations (e.g. Campbell 2003; UNAIDS 2004b: 10-18; Shoepf 2004b: 131; Susser and Stein 2004).

The discussions on the need to empower African women are ongoing (e.g. UNAIDS 2007; Danida 2005), but the strategy has also been questioned for

having limited effects if men are not targeted as well. In this context, the need to include men in AIDS interventions has been voiced from a range of different perspectives in recent years (e.g. Panos 1998, 2001; UNAIDS 2000, 2004a; Barker 2000; Barker and Ricardo 2005; Silberschmidt 2001 and 2005; Peacock and Leavak 2004; USAID 2005). Broadly speaking, these debates place emphasis on the centrality of men's behaviour in relation to the spread of HIV, for example, it has been asserted that 'men have more sexual partners than women' (Panos 1998: 3) or that 'men are less likely to pay attention to sexual health and safety than women' (UNAIDS 2000: 9). These debates also focus on the more powerful positions men are assumed to hold, particularly in relation to 'deciding when and how to have sex and whether to use condoms' (Barker 2000: 2). According to Akeroyd, a major theme in these discussions is that 'women cannot be expected to control the sexual behaviour of men' (Akeroyd 2004: 97). In relation to Africa, Akeroyd and Silberschmidt argue that by addressing women only a burden of responsibility is placed on the 'powerless' (Akeroyd 2004) or 'disadvantaged' (Silberschmidt, 2003: 426), which, instead, ought to be placed on the shoulders of 'the powerful' men (Akeroyd 2004: 97). These discussions on men's sexual behaviour and their 'powerful' position represent men as both *the problem* of and *the solution* to the AIDS epidemic. I will argue that this dual representation may contribute to the reproduction of the idea that African men are 'the powerful'. In turn, the reproduction such of gendered stereotypes may help to naturalise unequal gender relations in Sub-Saharan Africa.

With reference to recent research on *masculinities* in Africa (e.g. Cornwall & Lindisfarne 1994; Morell 2001; Lindsay & Miescher 2003), a few scholars have discussed not only the relevance of, but also the dilemmas, challenges and pitfalls associated with targeting men in AIDS interventions (Silberschmidt 2001 and 2005; Campbell 2001; Bujra 2002; Ouzgane & Morell 2005). However, detailed investigations of how these practices are played out in specific HIV/AIDS prevention programmes and their effects have not been carried out. The motivation for and relevance of this paper is to contribute to discussions

about the possible effects and consequences of HIV/AIDS prevention practices, which specifically target men. This is achieved by analysing and discussing two HIV/AIDS prevention programmes in Uganda, the 'Be a Man' campaign and Operation Gideon, which in different ways are inspired by the idea of targeting men.² The purpose of this analysis is not to write the complete story about the general effects and impacts of such approaches. Rather, the purpose is to bring to the fore the gendered character of HIV/AIDS prevention practices targeting men and to explore the gendered subject-positions such programmes produce.

It must also be clarified that the aim of this paper is not to discuss whether Operation Gideon and the 'Be a Man' campaign achieve or are likely to achieve the overall goals of sexual behaviour change. As previously mentioned, this paper is positioned within a debate on African AIDS, which stresses the importance of not taking for granted that sexual behaviour in Africa *must* be changed (Stillwaggon 2003; Oppong & Kalipeni 2004; Jungar & Oinas 2004; Jones 2007; Jassey & Nyanzi 2007). Only paying attention to sexual practices when understanding and responding to AIDS in Africa reinforces, perhaps unwillingly, the underlying idea that the cause of the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa (and its solution) is primarily to be found in exceptional patterns of sexual behaviour in Africa³ (Stillwaggon 2003; Jassey and Nyanzi 2007: 13-14; Jones 2004). The influence of this assumption is demonstrated by the silencing of other possible explanations, particularly studies like those previously mentioned, which stresses biological co-factors to heightened HIV susceptibility in sub-Saharan Africa (Stillwaggon 2006; Shoepf 2004: 20; Jassey and Nyanzi 2007: 32; Jones 2007: 389)⁴. Consequently, I would argue

² This discussion is based on fieldwork the author conducted in Kampala, Uganda between July-August 2006. The empirical material consists of a mixture of qualitative interviews with employees in the programmes Operation Gideon and the 'Be a Man' campaign, participant observations of programme activities and primary documents. Prior to the fieldwork the author had worked for six months as an intern in the micro-credit department in Reach Out Mbuya, the organisation, which runs Operation Gideon.

³ At its most extreme this is discussed as a question of a unique 'African sexuality' (e.g. Caldwell et. al 1989).

⁴ Another overlooked point about the African AIDS epidemic is the importance of the origin of the HIV virus. Iliffe (2006) argues that 'Africa had the worst epidemic because it had the first epidemic' (Iliffe 2006: 158). His argument is that since biological evidence demonstrates that it

that despite many aspects of AIDS responses are highly debated there is a general tendency among Western and African AIDS activists, feminists, religious leaders and policy makers alike to represent AIDS as a consequence of problematic sexualities (Stillwaggon 2003; Opong & Kalipeni 2004; Shoepf 2004a). Additionally, this trend is characterised by a tendency to either locate the reasons for problematic sexualities in 'traditional' practices and cultural norms (e.g. UNAIDS 2004: 18; UAC 2005b; McFadden 1992), or as a consequence of loss of cultural and moral values due to 'modernisation' and 'Westernisation' (e.g. Setel 1999; Heald 2002).

This paper is motivated by the need to question the tendencies to 'blame culture' (Narayan 1997) for HIV/AIDS in Africa (cf. Shoepf 2004a; Jassey and Nyanzi 2007). The perspectives previously outlined rest on similar dichotomies, African/Western, traditional/modern, rational/culture-bound, and on ideas about traditions and culture as something timeless and unchanged. Consequently, both perspectives hold the potential to reproduce stereotypical representations of 'African culture', particularly when it comes to discussions about sex and gender. In relation to the two HIV/AIDS prevention practices in Uganda, the paper will look at how mainstream narratives of culture, traditions and gender shape HIV/AIDS programmes and how these help produce gendered subject-positions. As the paper will demonstrate, Operation Gideon and the 'Be a Man' campaign build on unchallenged analyses of 'Ugandan culture' that stresses the privileged position Ugandan men have as they are expected or required to be the head of their families. The main argument of the paper is that when prevention programmes are built upon this rationale, it becomes impossible for such programmes to ultimately alter the main assumption upon which they rest. Consequently, it will be suggested that they contribute to the reproduction of the idea that Ugandan men necessarily are the ones in control.

is highly likely that the HIV virus originated in the western equatorial region of Africa, at least as far back as the 1950s, HIV could spread silently, across the continent, among the heterosexual population, thereby establishing itself as an epidemic, before the international health community were aware of the existence of HIV and AIDS (Iliffe, 2006: 158).

The discussion and analysis of Operation Gideon and the 'Be a Man' campaign builds on the 'governmentality' approach, which is inspired by the later works of Foucault (Foucault 1978; Foucault 1988a; Foucault 1988b; Foucault 1991; Rose & Miller 1992; Foucault 2002; Foucault 2003; Dean 2004). 'Governmentality' denotes the study of specific types of power relations: those where technologies of the self are incorporated into practices of government (Foucault 1988a: 19; Dean 2004: 147). More precisely, this is a question of analysing how specific practices of government are problematised, rationalised and practised (Dean 2004: 30-33), in order to discuss which practices of self-government they attempt to utilise and promote, and which subject-positions they hereby assume and produce. Here, the analyses of Operation Gideon and the 'Be a Man' campaign as practices of government begin with a discussion of how their goals are formulated through specific problematisations of and rationalities about Ugandan men's behaviour. Then, the discussion looks at the activities, methods, technologies and techniques through which the programmes attempt to achieve their goals. Thereafter the paper analyses the form of knowledge about 'Ugandan culture' the two programmes build upon, here the intent is to unravel the kind of gendered subject-positions these programmes produce. Lastly, in order to place the effects of these particular practices in broader debates and developments, the final section reviews some post-colonial perspectives that focus on the gendering of developing countries (Spivak 1988; Mohanty 1991; Narayan 1997; Kwok 2002; Arnfred 2004a; Arnfred 2004b).

Operation Gideon and the 'Be a Man' Campaign

One of the two programmes that will be discussed is a national Behaviour Change Communication campaign called the 'Be a Man' campaign. The overall goal of this campaign is no less than to 'reposition masculinity' in Uganda (HCP 2006) as a way to improve 'sexual and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS prevention among young people 15-24 years old' (YEAH 2005: 1). The other programme, Operation Gideon, focuses on men in a small urban community and seeks to 'involve men' in HIV/AIDS prevention activities (Reach Out 2005:

20). Operation Gideon is undertaken by an Ugandan faith-based NGO, Reach Out Mbuya Parish HIV/AIDS Initiative, which operates in an area called Mbuya in the outskirts of Kampala.

Since the proclamation of Uganda as a HIV/AIDS prevention success story (UNAIDS 1998; Parkhurst 2001), Uganda has attracted widespread international attention. Despite signs of 'erosion of the gains Uganda made against AIDS in the 1990s' (UNAIDS 2006: 18), Uganda continues to be the focus of academic literature, among policy makers and Western media. In the last few years, attention to Uganda has grown especially because of the controversial policy shift from one of Uganda's largest HIV/AIDS donors, namely the US. The 2004 President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) resulted in a greater emphasis on abstinence and faithfulness in US policy. This shift has been widely criticised, but for some authors it was a crucial determinant behind the Ugandan success story (e.g. Green 2003; Center for Health and Gender Equity 2004; Human Rights Watch 2005; Cohen et al. 2005; Richey 2005). It is not the purpose of this paper to engage in these discussions or to untangle the politics of Uganda's success. However, it must be noted that both programmes discussed here are supported by PEPFAR, and emphasis on the role of Ugandan men's unfaithfulness in these programmes has to be partly understood in this context.

However, these programmes must also be understood in the context of the increasing concern for HIV transmissions within marriages. According to the Centre for Health and Gender Equity, HIV prevalence among women in Sub-Saharan Africa peaks at the age of 25, 'indicating that the majority of women and girls are contracting HIV *within marriage*' (Centre for Health and Gender Equity 2004: 6 – original emphasis). Similarly, the Uganda HIV/AIDS Sero-Behavioural Survey 2004-2005 shows HIV prevalence peaking for women in the age group 30 to 34 (Uganda Ministry of Health 2006: 101). Such statistics have contributed to illuminate that marriage does not protect women from HIV, which, in turn, have led attention to women's limited possibilities for limiting the

risks if their husbands are having extramarital sexual relations (Richey 2005: 107; UNAIDS 2004b: 10; Centre for Health and Gender Equity 2004: 6). In both programmes the concern for HIV transmissions within marriage is translated into a concern for the behaviour of men in families, particularly in their role as husbands (HCP 2006; Interview Operation Gideon facilitators 1, 2 and 5)⁵.

The 'Be a Man' campaign: repositioning masculinity in Uganda

The 'Be a Man' campaign, begun in June 2006, is the second phase of a three-year long communication campaign⁶, primarily run by an implementation unit called Young, Empowered and Health (YEAH)⁷, located in Kampala. The YEAH campaigns are described as the result of 'the Uganda government's call for improved coordination and intensity of behaviour change communication (BCC) efforts' (YEAH 2006: 2) in areas of sexual and reproductive health and prevention of HIV/AIDS. It is the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) that funds the campaigns, with funds originating from PEPFAR. Following the standard USAID procedure of outsourcing much of its programme activities to other organisations (Stillwaggon 2006: 188), the YEAH campaigns are funded through the global, but US-based Health Communication Partnership (HCP)⁸. HCP thus functions as both a founder and 'technical advisor' to YEAH. Consequently, HCP has been intimately involved in the start up of YEAH and continues to be highly involved in the actual implementation of the various campaign activities.

The YEAH campaigns rest on the rationale that to fight HIV/AIDS, as well as other aspect of sexual and reproductive ill health, a range of underlying factors must be addressed (UAC 2005a: 9-10). In the 'Be a Man' campaign 'gender

⁵ For a more elaborate discussion of this see Rasmussen 2007: 39-42.

⁶ The first phase of the campaign focused on reducing 'transactional sex' and was called 'Something for Something Love' (YEAH 2005).

⁷ This implementation unit is managed by a consortium of two Ugandan NGOs: Straight Talk and Communication for Development Foundation Uganda (CDFU).

⁸ HCP is a global communication initiative based at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health's Center for Communication Programs (CCP) in partnership with the Academy for Educational Development, Save the Children, the International HIV/AIDS Alliance, and Tulane University's School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, see: <http://www.hcpartnership.org/>.

relations' is the underlying factor that needs to be tackled (YEAH 2006: 3). The focus of the campaign is, more precisely, the impact 'male gender norms' (YEAH 2006) are believed to have in the spread of HIV⁹. It is assumed that a range of 'cultural and social expectations' (YEAH 2006) of men in Uganda lead young Ugandan men to engage in sexual behaviour that 'put themselves and their partners at risk' (YEAH 2006) of HIV infection. Ugandan men are therefore viewed as both the problem of and the solution to HIV/AIDS prevention because male gender norms make their behaviour and the position they hold as men problematic. The male gender norms are believed to cause particular types of male behaviours such as unfaithfulness, reluctance to discuss HIV testing and HIV status with partners, disengagement in sexual and reproductive health matters, as well as inability to resolve conflicts without using violence (Interview YEAH employee; UAC 2005b: 3; YEAH 2006: 3). These male gender norms are also believed to grant Ugandan men the exclusive right to make decisions and control finances in their families, which allow the campaign to reach the conclusion that 'men are ultimately a key factor to improving the health of women and children' (YEAH 2006: 4). In this way, men are perceived as a key part of the solution to AIDS.

Following these assumptions, the purpose of the 'Be a Man' campaign is not so much to change Ugandan men, as it is to change male gender norms, or as they were described elsewhere the 'Ugandan definitions of masculinity' (UAC 2005b: 5; YEAH 2006: 3). Therefore, the overall goal of the campaign is exactly to address a problematic masculinity by 'repositioning masculinity in Uganda' (HCP 2006:1). The motto 'Be a Man!' thus reflects the assumption that Ugandans connect certain ideals of masculinity with the phrase 'Be a Man!' and that the goal of the campaign is to alter these connotations.

⁹ Despite the fact that this campaign is defined to address sexual and reproductive health broadly, the key focus in many of the documents, and particularly in my interviews with campaign employees, was the issue of HIV/AIDS.

In other contexts, the male gender norms, the notions of masculinity, or the cultural and social expectations of men in Uganda are described as 'traditional male attitudes and behaviours' (YEAH and HCP 2006). Consequently, it seems that redefining masculinity in Uganda is understood as a question of 'modernising' Ugandan masculinity. This principle is reflected in one of the key messages the campaign is to convey: 'These are modern times, we have to adapt and change for the better' (YEAH 2006: 13¹⁰). Such rationalities contribute to depict 'Ugandan culture' as something traditional, which must be left behind in the name of HIV/AIDS prevention.

The alternative masculinity the 'Be a Man' campaign aims to achieve is demonstrated by the campaign's definition of an ideal man. These ideal men are defined as 'Gender Equitable Men' (in short GEM), a concept borrowed from the writings and recommendations of Gary Barker (Barker 2005). The Gender Equitable Men are men who: 'Respect themselves, their partners, and their peers, are faithful to their spouses, are involved in their family's reproductive health issues, are caring fathers who provide financial and emotional support for their spouses and children, and do NOT use violence' (YEAH 2006: 6 - original emphasis).

The activities in the 'Be a Man' campaign include a media campaign and the training of partner organisations. Training is meant to enable a web of other organisations in Uganda to participate in the process of redefining masculinity. Through a 'cascade of training', from YEAH's master trainers to the partner organisations' own peer educators/facilitators, the messages is expected to reach the primary target audience – young Ugandan men¹¹. This is a method of getting the message across, which relies on a high level of self-government, and opens up possibilities for different 'translations'. The organisations that

¹⁰ This appears in the Campaign Strategy under the heading 'The key message points' in a section called 'Communication objective and message brief for unmarried boys/men'.

¹¹ The campaign operates with 3 primary target audiences: unmarried boys/men, 18-24 year old men, and unmarried girls/women. Married women are a secondary target audience, along with media personalities and community leaders (YEAH 2006: 12).

have been chosen to become partners are organisations that, in different ways, are already dealing with men: the army, male-dominated workplaces, universities, Reach Out's Operation Gideon, as well as other NGOs working on AIDS or sexual and reproductive health issues. During these trainings, various facilitation techniques are used with the intention to enlighten the male participants to see how the Ugandan notions of masculinity function as a 'matrix' (Galeria 2006) that governs their behaviour and their beliefs. The rationale is that once Ugandan men understand how this matrix makes them behave in ways that are harmful to both themselves and others, they will feel encouraged to change (YEAH 2006: 8-9). More precisely, the belief is that upon realising that notions of masculinity are constructions, and in this case 'negative' constructions, the men will want to change into gender equitable men (YEAH 2006: 12-18; Interview HCP employee 2). Training activities ultimately seek to create a space where men can rethink masculinity in Uganda. However, 'the right' masculinity is so obvious to those implementing this campaign that they expect the men to 'choose' this one.

The media campaign¹² seeks to promote this right way of being a man – by '[making] it 'cool and hip' to be a more 'gender-equitable' man' (Barker 2005: 165-6). For example, two TV-spots convey messages such as 'a real man focuses on the important things in life', which is depicted as a question of a man missing a goal in a football match, because he is preoccupied with checking out a young woman, and 'a real man treasures his wife and family and does what is necessary to protect them' (HCP and YEAH 2006).

In conclusion, the 'Be a Man' campaign suggests that a problematic masculinity is a key obstacle to HIV/AIDS prevention and is to be addressed by Ugandan men who must decide to change 'their culture'¹³.

¹² The media campaign includes an educational radio show directed at young Ugandans, two TV-spots which were aired in June 2006 during the FIFA 2006 World Cup (they can be downloaded from: <http://www.hcpartnership.org/Press/press2006-06-21.php>), t-shirts which read: 'Be a Man' – Caring, Respectful, Non violent, Faithful', and posters.

¹³ For a more elaborate discussion of this see Rasmussen 2007: 90-92.

Reach Out's Operation Gideon: striving for responsible men who take proper care of their families

The Ugandan NGO, Reach Out Mbuya Parish HIV/AIDS Initiative was founded in 2001¹⁴. It is renowned for its provision of 'holistic care' for people living with HIV/AIDS in the Mbuya area. However, since 2003, HIV/AIDS prevention and 'sensitisation' efforts have also been part of the NGO activities. The HIV/AIDS prevention department is called Friends For Life. Reach Out is a faith-based organisation, with close ties to the Catholic Church. Volunteers, clients and participants are not necessarily Catholics, but the Christian commitment to love your neighbour, to be a Good Samaritans and generally to live morally upright lives are important guiding principles for the work of the organisation, as well as the way clients and participants are encouraged to govern themselves.

In 2004, Reach Out started HIV/AIDS education meetings for adult men and women living in Mbuya. After some time, men started to drop out, and eventually the groups were almost only attended by women. In response to this, a programme targeting men only was developed in May 2005. The programme was named Operation Gideon¹⁵, and its main objective is defined as 'involving men in fighting against HIV/AIDS' (Reach Out 2005: 20). The purpose being 'to help men become responsible parents, work together with their wives, and join in the fight against HIV' (Reach Out 2006: 22). More precisely, the reason to involve men was justified by reference to women's (in)abilities to affect the behaviour of their husbands:

¹⁴ Reach Out was started by the catholic parish priest in Mbuya and a Danish physician in collaboration with a number of volunteers from the parish, as a home care project for people suffering from AIDS. Today, the organisation offers free medical care (including antiretroviral treatment) combined with social support, to people living with HIV/AIDS in Mbuya, and conducts HIV/AIDS prevention/sensitisation in the schools of Mbuya and for different groups living in the area (youth, women, men and couples). Reach Out primarily relies on international funding, and in recent year, it has particularly been the funding from US's Centre for Disease Control (CDC) that has enabled the organisation to run its programmes, once again it is primarily PEPFAR funding.

¹⁵ Referring to the biblical figure Gideon. God charged him with the responsibility 'to rescue the children of Israel from slavery'. This is meant to underscore the message: 'men, now you have the responsibility to free your family from the scourge of AIDS' (Interview OG facilitator 1).

We used to ask women . . . do you share with your husband?
Yes. What are their responses as far as going for HIV testing?
They would say: 'Ah, you go and test, if you are ok, I'm also ok'
they felt it would be very hard for a wife to convince a man . . . to
go for HIV test and even the changing [of behaviour] (Interview
Operation Gideon facilitator 1).

One reason for targeting men is thus ascribed to how 'African culture accords a lot of power to men, [why] it is important to sensitise them alongside their wives.' (Reach Out 2006: 22). Men's sexual behaviour is presented as another justification since 'men have not been taking an active part in the sensitisation program, yet they are responsible for much sexual 'mis'behavior. As a solution to this, Friends for Life developed a strategy purposely aimed at involving men in fighting against HIV/AIDS' (Reach Out 2005: 20). In ways very similar to the 'Be a Man' campaign, men are represented as simultaneously being the problem of and the solution to HIV/AIDS. However, the problematisations of men's conduct in Operation Gideon is more focused on how men's unfaithfulness is caused by their inability to control sexual behaviour (as opposed to being enabled by cultural and social expectations), and is concerned with Ugandan men's tendency to spend all their time in bars, rather than with their families, and their tendency not to allow their wives to work because it is believed that men are supposed to be the provider of the family. Men are portrayed as the solution since it is assumed that in 'African culture here, women (...) they don't say much about the family, the whole saying belongs to the man' (Interview OG facilitator 3). Hence, like in the 'Be a Man' campaign it is assumed that because of cultural expectations, Ugandan men have capacities, which women do not have, to initiate change in the families.

However, in contrast to the 'Be a Man' Campaign, the key concern in Operation Gideon is not so much to redefine cultural and social expectations of men, as it is to change how men in Mbuya relate to these expectations. Guided by Christian or other religious beliefs and technologies of the self (cf. Foucault 1988a), the men are to resist dangers and desires caused by 'negative' notions of culture. Unlike the 'Be a Man' campaign, which tends to represent Ugandan culture as something traditional to be left behind in the name of modernisation,

the facilitators in Operation Gideon talk about 'positive' and 'negative' culture. In their words negative culture designates beliefs and practices, which are to be fought and resisted both in the name of HIV/AIDS prevention and according to Christian rules of conduct. Positive culture includes cultural practices, which could be useful to further the goals of HIV/AIDS prevention as well as the men's adherence to Christian rules (Interviews OG facilitators 1 & 2). Accordingly, among the facilitators, the AIDS epidemic is cast as a consequence of a loss of culture or moral values, and part of the solution to AIDS lays in reinvigoration of certain aspects of Ugandan culture (Interviews OG facilitators 2 & 3).

Like the 'Be Man' campaign, Operation Gideon operates with ideas about the nature of an ideal man. In Operation Gideon, the ideal man is a 'responsible man' (Interview OG facilitator 3), who remains faithful to his wife or partner, resists sexual desires, and also resists other desires such as spending money on drinking. He communicates well with his wife or partner (including on issues of HIV testing) and prioritises the survival and well being of the family. He involves his wife in planning and allows her to work, but, most importantly, he takes on the role of the family's manager of health issues – the one responsible for diminishing causes to ill health¹⁶.

Operation Gideon organises discussion groups that meet every two weeks in different drinking places in Mbyua¹⁷. In these groups, the Operation Gideon facilitators engage in various discussions with male (and female) participants. Like in the 'Be a Man' campaign, the techniques used in Operation Gideon focus on making the men realise how their behaviour is problematic, and how this is connected to cultural notions and practices. The method employed is to 'make the men think for themselves' and not to 'tell the men how they should behave' (Interview OG facilitator 1). In the discussion groups, making the men think for themselves came across as a question of highlighting the

¹⁶ For a more elaborate discussion of this see Rasmussen, 2007: 52.

¹⁷ Meeting men in drinking places actually appears to be a often used tactic in AIDS interventions targeting men (cf. Bujra 2002: 225)

consequences of 'negative' behaviour and the positive outcomes of being a responsible man, as well as pointing out the Christian (or other religious) norms which requires that the men act in the defined responsible way. However, despite the intention not to tell men how to behave, strong moral notions of 'proper male conduct' transpire from these techniques of enhancing the men's capacities to govern themselves. In the 'Be a Man' campaign clear notions of proper male conduct also underpin the facilitation process, in the sense that it is assumed that Ugandan men would want to be 'GEMs' after understanding how the dominant ideals of masculinity in Uganda make them behave 'negatively'. However, the underlying message on how you should behave as a man came across more directly in Operation Gideon. Perhaps, the ideals of proper male conduct appear more uncompromisingly in Operation Gideon, because the techniques of self-government also rest on religious rules of conduct, and not 'only' on health awareness.

In conclusion, in Operation Gideon certain aspects of 'Ugandan culture' are believed to lead to irresponsible male behaviour. Therefore, the facilitators attempt to enable men in Mbuya to resist these negative cultural influences through messages combining AIDS prevention messages and Christian moralities.

'The culture here is so strong'

As previously discussed, both Operation Gideon and the 'Be a Man' campaign build upon certain ideas of 'Ugandan culture'. Prior to the launch of the 'Be a Man' campaign, HCP arranged for different types of research about the male gender norms in Uganda to be conducted. Questionnaire surveys based on the so-called GEM-scale¹⁸ (cf. Barker 2005: 166-8) were conducted in order to determine the degree of non-gender-equitable male behaviour and attitudes

¹⁸ The GEM scale has 24 items, i.e. questions or statements the respondents are asked whether they agree, partially agree or do not agree with (Barker 2005: 166). They include statements such as (here summarised, because they are taken from a presentation): 'Women's job to care for home and family', 'There are times a woman should be beaten', 'Men have the final word in the home', 'Men are always ready to have sex' etc. (HCP 2006: 4-5).

among young Ugandan men (HCP 2006: 4-5)¹⁹. The results of this survey thus demonstrates to what an extent young Ugandan men identify themselves with ideas and behaviours that are defined as problematic in relation to HIV/AIDS prevention. A qualitative research study was also conducted the purpose of which was to:

- Understand Ugandan definitions of masculinity from both male and female perspectives;
- Understand societal and familial expectations of a 'real man';
- Identify behaviours and practices used to express masculinity in sexual relationships, fatherhood, reproductive health and violence; and
- Identify social influences which encourage men to think and act inequitably or equitably (UAC 2005b: 5).

The results of this research, as they are presented in the proceedings from the Strategy Design Workshop (UAC 2005b), include generalisations about 'Ugandan definitions of masculinity', such as:

Male and female Ugandans said that:

- A woman is property of a man.
- A woman serves a man's needs (takes care of home, children, and sex).
- Women lack rights or power in financial planning, decision-making, condom use.
- Children are a reflection of the father, not the mother.
- Religion and culture define moral standards differently for men and women.
- Men give women little credit for their intellectual abilities (UAC 2005b: 6).

Remarkably the study fails to discuss distinctions and nuances in the notion of masculinity in Uganda, particularly in relation to differences between the different districts in which the focus groups and interviews were conducted²⁰. Perhaps this is simply the consequence of assuming that one can make sweeping claims about notions of masculinity for an entire nation without

¹⁹ The purpose with this survey is actually to have a baseline study. The idea is that when the campaign has come to an end, its impact on the male gender norms in Uganda can be measured by conducting a new survey of this kind (Interview, HCP employee 2).

²⁰ This research is based on focus group discussions and one-on-one interviews in five different districts in Uganda; Gulu, Kabarole, Luwero, Mbarara, and Soroti.

reference to variations amongst different groups of people, people with different social positions and between generations.

In Operation Gideon, systematic production of knowledge about 'Ugandan culture' has not been conducted. The varying ideas and rationalities about 'Ugandan culture', which are expressed in Reach Out documents and in the author's interview with Operation Gideon's facilitators, seem to be the product of views the Ugandan facilitators have about 'their own' culture, such as 'when you look at our culture in the past, men used to talk and women listen' (Interview OG facilitator 3); 'also in our culture which gives still, plays a big role, where that a man is a boss, he is not a partner, but a boss' (Interview OG facilitator 1); and 'unfortunately the men never turned . . . up in big numbers . . . simply because the culture here is so strong, and it has discriminatory tendencies' (Interview OG facilitator 2). Conceivably, these ideas are also inspired by the different reasons for 'problematic' male behaviour the participants in the Operation Gideon sessions present in the discussions. These justifications are often located in what 'culture' requires them to do (Interview OG facilitator 4).

These perspectives on 'Ugandan culture', which are employed in and constitutes the rationale of the 'Be a Man' campaign and Operation Gideon, are characterised by a tendency to 'blame culture' (cf. Narayan 1997) for HIV/AIDS. They tend to represent cultural practices in Uganda in a totalising and a-historical way without any reference to variations among different groups of people or over time (cf. Narayan 1997: 48-53), and they grant primacy to 'Ugandan culture' when explaining problematic male behaviour. Some ethnographic studies from specific parts of Uganda easily complicate the picture of 'Ugandan masculinity' these programmes paint (e.g. Nyanzi 2007a; Gilbert 2007); particularly studies which demonstrate different ways the experience of AIDS contributes to reconfigurations of gender relations and masculinities (e.g. Wyrod 2007; Nyanzi 2007b). When Operation Gideon and the 'Be a Man' campaign employ these perspectives about 'Ugandan culture'

as 'facts' to be considered in practices of HIV/AIDS prevention, they are, in turn, reproduced as a 'truth'. More precisely, when the practices are constituted on premises such as, that in Uganda 'the man has the whole saying in the family', it becomes, for their part, the truth about Ugandan men.

How to practice your authority as a man properly

One of the main effects of both of these programmes is the tendency to reproduce the notion of men as privileged, thus naturalising the view that being male equals being in control. This reproduction of male gendered power happens because the programmes' very existence rests on the assumption that, in Uganda, men generally are the ones in control. The programmes also tend to reproduce notions about men as being controlled by their desires and as having greater sexual desires than women. The following discussions will focus on the naturalisation of the power of men as a way of contrasting these practices to those that try to 'empower women'.

In the 'Be a Man' campaign, men's capacities to initiate change in their families define the 'empowerment of women' strategy as limited in its effects, in fact, as one interviewee stated 'although we are empowering the women and the girl child, the decision, the power, relations still lie with the men in the home' (Interview HCP employee 1). In the 'Be a Man' campaign, the issue of men holding power at home is often highlighted as part of the problematic aspects of male gender norms in Uganda. However, it does not seem that the campaign actually aims to change that the power still rests with men. Rather, the campaign naturalises unequal power relationships even further by positing that Ugandan men and boys do not know how to practice authority properly:

[A] boy grows up knowing that a man is supposed to make decisions . . . the way they are brought up they grow up to think that a man is supposed to know things somehow . . . in this particular region, we have a concept . . . which in English probably means auntie, an auntie has a traditional role of talking to a younger girl as she's growing up telling her to run a home, how to manage life, about children, many other things. But we don't have a similar thing for . . . the boy, we don't have something like an uncle . . . So basically that leaves the boys in

a vacuum, they keep guessing, what is right, what is wrong, according to what they hear from their peers, what they see their parents/fellows doing (Interview YEAH employee).

The interviewee suggests that there is a tendency for boys to grow up knowing that they, when they reach adulthood, are the ones supposed to make the decisions in their families and therefore they are required to know right from wrong. However it is also suggested there are no social systems, which can actually teach young boys how to know right from wrong. Following these assumptions, the interviewee implies that the main concerns of the 'Be a Man' campaign is to educate young men and boys on how to practice their authority as men properly. The fact that the authority of men is naturalised in the 'Be a Man' campaign is also reflected in the facilitation techniques used during trainings activities. Another interviewee talked about the way in which facilitators have to interact with the participants so that they do not feel uncomfortable. A key point was not to 'hurt their culture':

[N]ot hurting the cultural . . . you are not trying to say that what you've been thinking culturally is bad, is wrong . . . they would reject it immediately . . . the reason why they do it is that they want to still maintain and to show the community and the society and their families that they are still the men, they are still in control, they still have the power, so anything that you bring that makes them feel that their power is threatened, they would not accept, so just handle it in a such a way that, you know what, this is, what you are doing, you could do it this way, and you'll still be a man, you'll still be the man, the husband (Interview HCP employee 1).

Therefore, while discussing with men the negative consequences of being a 'traditional' man and the positive outcomes of becoming a gender equitable man, it is important for the facilitator to stress that if the male participants choose to become gender equitable men they will still have the power, they will still be in control. In conclusion, it can be argued that the campaign is not about changing unequal power relationships. Furthermore, the same interviewee stressed that being a man equals to being in control by linking 'still having power' with 'still being a man' (Interview HCP employee 1). This statement

makes it impossible to conceive being a man Uganda as anything but being the one in control.

Operation Gideon naturalises that in Ugandan families 'the whole saying belongs to the man' because '[if] a woman has the knowledge she can impart it in her children, but it's difficult for her to influence the decisions in the home' (Interview OG facilitator 2). Consequently, in Operation Gideon, they believe that in order to reach out to the whole family, they have to convince the man. Additionally, it is considered absolutely crucial that men generally make 'the right' decisions, because 'whether a man makes a right decision or the wrong one, the woman has to do' (Interview OG facilitator 3). The question of how to teach men to practice their authority as a man properly, can be summarised as a matter of making the men in Mbuya understand that 'as a man this is how you should behave!'²¹. This message can be exemplified by the kind of questions the facilitators ask the male participants, such as 'as a man, this is how you should help your family', 'you as a man how can you settle disputes? . . . you, as the head of the family, how can you settle disputes?' (Interview OG facilitator 4). The facilitators often discussed how the men participating in Operation Gideon tended to highlight how their limited income generating possibilities posed challenges to their role of husbands. In order to challenge this tendency to 'cry poverty' (OG session Aug 6, 2006), the facilitators ask questions such as 'we ask them aha, you have nothing to do? Will you be in such a situation up to when? Because you have a family, you have children, and you are the head of the family' (Interview OG facilitator 4²²). This last quote demonstrates that the primary issue at stake in Operation Gideon is to teach these men how to take proper care of their families.

Thus, in both Operation Gideon and the 'Be a Man' campaign men constitute the primary object of government, based on the assumption that, as the ones

²¹ This is a summarised and rephrased sentence based on quotes like those below.

²² It must be noted that the kind of questions asked and the style of interaction in the Operation Gideon sessions, varied a great deal between the facilitators. These quotes demonstrate some of the least subtle ways the facilitation took place.

generally in control in society, men can be effective agents of change. By naturalising male gendered power in this way, the question of gendered power relations remains unquestioned and unseen.

From African women as victims of African men to African men as victims of 'culture'

It can be argued that both the empowering women and the targeting men approaches to HIV/AIDS prevention, rest on similar gender-and-development (GAD) assumptions about 'world wide patriarchy' and 'universal female subordination' (Arnfred 2004a: 11). In relation to Africa, the GAD discourses have been credited with reproducing colonial stances on 'African culture', 'with ideas of excessive patriarchy and African women as overworked and downtrodden beasts of burden' (Arnfred 2004a: 12). The persistent focus on empowering women in HIV/AIDS interventions in Africa can be read as a manifestation of the influence of these representations.

These development narratives construct African women as victims of male oppression of African men unable to control their sexual desires (Arnfred 2004a: 11-12; Becker 2004; cf. Kwok 2002). These representations of Africa function as a moral obligation for development institutions and Western feminists to intervene in order to emancipate and empower African women (Arnfred 2004a: 12), and therefore to make 'addressing gender inequality' part and parcel of all types of development interventions. This reiterates one of the moral justifications of the colonial mission of 'saving brown women from brown men' (Spivak 1988). Today, the obligation to save African women from African men is reinforced by the urgency of the AIDS epidemic in sub-Saharan Africa.

When considering the overall justifications for targeting men in HIV/AIDS prevention, they generally come across as a reformulation of such GAD perspectives on planned gender change in Africa. African men are no longer precluded from the discussions but are involved as agents to collaborate with in the project of ending male oppression and female subordination in Africa. No

longer precluding men from the discussions can indeed seem like a positive change, since HIV/AIDS prevention practices only focusing on how women 'should stand together to fight AIDS' (Silberschmidt 2003: 426), may silence the role men play in transmitting HIV and free them from the responsibility to participate in the fight against AIDS (Silberschmidt 2003). However, a serious dilemma may arise from assuming universal, excessive patriarchy in African countries, while at the same time handing African men the task of diminishing patriarchy and letting go of some of their privileges. This strategy begs the question that, if indeed men are privileged, why would they agree to give up some of their privileges? (Bujra 2002: 211-2).

In Operation Gideon and the 'Be a Man' campaign, what happens instead is that men's privileged position is reaffirmed and men are simply asked to use this position differently. Hence, as the analysis of the two HIV/AIDS prevention programmes has shown patriarchy is left untouched and perhaps even reinforced with the new responsibility of granting men custodianship of HIV/AIDS prevention in their families. Additionally, women are granted only a limited role; in Operation Gideon and the 'Be a Man' campaign, women are mostly presented as wives or partners that men have to respect, communicate well with, not be violent towards and provide for. That women, for example, can be other things than wives or future wives, that women can treat their husbands with disrespect (cf. Cornwall 2001; Silberschmidt 2005), or that women can be unfaithful to their husbands (cf. Cornwall 2003) are not part of these discussions.

These representations are a continuation of the representations of African women as victims of African men. However, in these representations, African men are also presented as victims, in the sense that they are seen as 'victims' of problematic male gender norms or negative cultural influences. It could be argued that this move allows Operation Gideon and the 'Be a Man' campaign to place Ugandan men, instead of only Ugandan women, at the forefront as

objects of government to be rescued by benevolent gender experts or Christian facilitators.

Conclusion

The article has shown how the recent ideas about the need to include men in HIV/AIDS prevention are played out in two specific programmes in Uganda. In Operation Gideon and the 'Be a Man' campaign men are targeted because it is assumed that Ugandan men are their families' main figure of authority. This assumption is built on different types of knowledge about 'Ugandan culture', which is characterised by totalising and a-historical tendencies. Hence, despite the programmes use different methods and techniques and understand the need to engage with 'Ugandan culture' differently, both tend to reinforce the same 'truth' about Ugandan men, namely that men are the ones in control in their families or society. The effects of reproducing such stereotypical gender representations can contribute to the reinforcement of particular moral and gendered notions of sexuality.

However, the type of self-government, the two practices attempt to profit from or promote is rather different. Operation Gideon primarily relies on strengthening Christian techniques of self-government to enable men in Mbuya to resist the dangers of Ugandan culture negative influences. The 'Be a Man' campaign combines health awareness techniques with specific gender perspectives to enable Ugandan men to reflect on how certain dominant notions of masculinity in Uganda makes them behave in ways, which are unhealthy to themselves and others. Hence, the effects of these programmes are rather different.

The commonalities in the international discourses on AIDS, and the ideas, which for a while gain a stable position as a promising strategy, or even become 'best practice', should not lead to assume universal outcomes. There is a need to study further the consequences and effects of practising HIV/AIDS prevention in sub-Saharan Africa that specifically targets men, in ways that pay

attention to how these overall ideas are translated on the ground into specific practices of HIV/AIDS prevention in NGOs, faith-based organisations, government-initiated programmes, internationally driven projects etc. Investigating the different kinds of 'truths' about proper male and female conduct that are produced, as well as the sort of self-government that is promoted in specific programmes targeting men can shed light on which representations of 'African culture' and gender relations these HIV/AIDS interventions produce and reproduce.

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