Annex 3

<u>Engaging men for equality = sustained change in women's lives?</u>
A study of attitudes regarding gender equality and gender roles amongst participants of
a men engage program in Bukavu, DRC.

A research conducted for Oxfam Novib by Srushti Mahamuni – de Gee

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List of Acronyms

DRC – Democratic Republic of Congo
SRHR – Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights
VAW – Violence against women
FARDC – Forces Armées de la République Démocratique de Congo
MNC – Multinational Corporation
FGD – Focus group discussion

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Abstract

This is a comparative research that will explore attitudes regarding gender equality and gender roles among men who have participated in men engage programs and men who have not, to determine if these programs bring about sustainable change in behavior regarding gender equality, thereby positively affecting women's lives. The research takes place in Eastern DRC and uses models from social psychology to analyze the extent of behavioral change amongst the participants of the men engage forum of Oxfam's WECAN campaign. It finds that even though there is an intention to change, there seems to be no substantial change in attitudes or beliefs regarding gender equality amongst men and women interviewed, in Eastern DRC. Thereby, concluding that context specific programs are required to affect long-term change and that 'one – size – fits – all' kind of development is often set up to fail. Further it explores ideas of women's empowerment through their own eyes to stress upon the importance of contextual implementation of programs. In conclusion offering concrete recommendations to Oxfam Novib (and others) to improve development practices.

About the author
The author, Srushti Mahamuni- de Gee has recently graduated with a Masters in Development from the International Institute of Social Studies, The Hague. She specializes in Gender, Human Rights and Conflict resolution. Passionate about gender equality she firmly believes in the feminist adage – Personal is political and strives to bring in reflexivity and critical thought to her own everyday practices and to institutions and people around her. You can read more of her work and adventures on her blog – africaadventures.blogspot.com or get in touch - send an email to srushtimahamuni@gmail.com

Chapter 1 - Setting the stage

1.1 Statement of the research problem

The research will explore attitudes regarding gender equality and gender roles among men who have participated in men engage programs to determine if these programs bring about sustainable change in women's lives in eastern DRC. This research is connected with the fact that a lot of donor agencies are now investing millions of dollars into developing and implementing programs to engage men for gender equality all over the world. While this is important and necessary because sustainable change in society can come about only when men and women are working together to create change, it often takes attention and money away from programs directly targeted towards women. As Kristen Woolf, strategy director at the Girl Hub elucidates, "Don't lose focus on girls: Very clearly men and boys have got to be a central component of the solution, but we need to tread carefully here not to lose the focus on equality and empowerment for girls and women. Scarce funding is being diverted away from girls to programs that leave them out and directly benefit boys and men (all under the name of gender equality). We must be very intentional in the design of gender-equality programs to not lose sight of the primary goal: leveling the playing field."[1]

In recent times, 'men engage' has become the new buzz word and any organization with this keyword on its agenda gets a higher value on for funding in a donor run aid world. This may often hamper the implementation of other programs that are of a higher priority in certain contexts. Programs that are contextualized in complexly different contexts than the ones they are implemented in often create a 'one size fits all' kind of development. The problem is that one size in fact doesn't fit all and when programs are implemented with little or no regard to context they more often than not are set up to fail. In the rare cases where they do work, often the change created is superficial and lasts only as long as the program lasts. This research will critically examine the success of a particular men's forum of the WECAN campaign by Oxfam in Eastern DRC. More specifically this research explore the extent to which men engage programs bring about changes in societal attitudes

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[1] Leach, A. (2014) '#HeforShe : How to Engage Men in the Fight for Gender Equality.' *The Guardian, UK,* adolescent girls - global development professionals network. 23/09/2014, .

about gender equality and gender roles, thereby determining the extent of change in women's lives.

1.2 Contextual background – Men Engage

The movement that had been gaining ground for a few years now has reached an all time high last September with the UNWOMEN program HeForShe. All over the world men are being invited to stand up for equality, stand up for women. The mainstreaming of men into the gender agenda is not a new phenomenon; it has been building up for longer. According to Dover, work with men and boys was born out of social work and feminist studies and even though work with men and boys within development started in the 90's, the past 10 years have seen a tremendous increase in interventions. "During the second wave feminism's uprising in the 1960's and 1970's, concerned men, generally left-wing, organized male groups and outreach organizations, furthermore, there developed an academic genre during the 1980s of masculinity and gender studies within sociology, anthropology, psychology and public health. Work with men and boys within development cooperation started in the 1990s, but it is since the turn of the millennium, and especially the last ten

Figure 1 Emma Watson launching the #HeforShe campaign

years, that has seen a major increase in interventions. Work with men and boys has been integrated by organizations with broader agendas, as well as been the focus of specialized gender organizations" (Dover, 2014)

Men engage is has gaining ground in global policymaking and advocacy. A recent research conducted by World Health Organization states that in order to be effective in changing the state of inequality around the world men engage programs need to be scaled up.[2] Presently a large number of countries have

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[2] *Policy approaches to engaging men and boys in achieving gender equality and health equity*, World Health Organization, 2010.

committed internationally to work with men for gender equality - "Relevant international commitments are embodied in the International Conference on Population and Development (1994), the Programme of Action of the World Summit on Social Development (1995) and its review held in 2000, the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), the twenty-sixth special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS (2001), the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) (2004 and 2009), the Global Symposium on Engaging Men and Boys on Achieving Gender Equality (2009), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) Action Framework on Women, Girls, Gender Equality and HIV (2009), and the UNAIDS Operational Plan for Action Framework (2009)." (WHO, 2010)[3] Myriad programs and projects to engage men are being replicated in different countries, resources are being poured from the North into the South to engage men for equality, to teach 'them' how to be 'good men.' Not only is it problematic to create a dichotomy between the good men and the bad but also, many times projects are replicated without questioning the contexts in which they are being placed. This often leads to reinforcing patriarchal norms and notions that the projects are trying to fight against. For instance in the specific context of DRC, decades of extreme conflict and instability have on one hand made it more difficult for men to fulfill traditional provider roles but on the other hand this has lead to a stronger reinforcing of traditional gender roles (Lwambo, 2011). In these contexts, motivation for men to support gender equality is not apparent and needs to be explored and understood. Further more the underlying assumption that changing gender roles would bring about change in structures of society thereby leading to gender equality. This link while problematic in general becomes even more troubling in a context of ongoing conflict. Judy el Bushra(2003) explains that often gender roles can become strictly reinforced in times of conflict. Further radical change in society with regards to gender equality requires a 'dismantling of patriarchy' which is not a short term goal and 'requires much dialogue and debate around fundamental values' (Bushra 2003) Engaging men and boys for equality requires a reframing of dominant notions of masculinity and femininity. However, in order to challenge dominant notions of masculinity and femininity it is primordial to understand them and to contextualize them. Unless these are explored, behavior interventions to bring about gender equality and change are merely scraping the surface.

1.3 Situating Oxfam Novib

In 1953, the Netherlands experienced severe floods that killed over 1800 people. During this time other countries " including much poorer countries, such as India"(Oxfam Novib, n.d) provided the Netherlands with emergency aid. "This

[3] *Policy approaches to engaging men and boys in achieving gender equality and health equity*, World Health Organization, 2010.

display of generosity inspired Father Simon Jelsma to want to return the favor"(Oxfam Novib, n.d), and thus in 1956 he and others founded the Netherlands Organization for International Assistance (Novib). Novib became one of the country's first politically independent and non-religious development organizations. [4] It soon established itself as an entity in 'Dutch public consciousness'[5] and started tackling poverty on different fronts through supporting projects in developing countries as well as through influencing governments, businesses and international institutions. In 1996 Novib became an affiliate of Oxfam International and in 2006, they changed their name to Oxfam Novib. With a mission to achieve ' a just world without poverty' (Oxfam Novib 2012) Oxfam international is a rights based confederation consisting of 17 organizations working in 94 different countries.(Oxfam International 2013) According to Oxfam, one of the ways to achieve its overall mission is by advancing gender justice and thus Oxfam international is committed to 'putting women's rights at the heart of all we do' (Oxfam International 2013). It is no surprise then that gender equality and women's rights are a central feature of Oxfam organizations, including Novib. Oxfam Novib structures its programs under five aims - (Aim 1) Right to a Sustainable Livelihood; (Aim 2.) Basic Social Services; (Aim 3.) Life and Security; (Aim 4.) Social and Political Participation; (Aim 5.) Identity: Gender Justice[6] (Oxfam Novib 2014).

Currently Oxfam Novib is undergoing reorganization due to budget cuts by the Dutch government. Although, still part of the strategic partnership, Oxfam Novib's funding was reduced by 80%. Despite these changes ONL is determined to keep up the quality of its programs. With this aim in mind ONL piloted Oxfam Novib Academy(ONA) in January 2015. Placed under the Knowledge Innovation and management strategy, the goal of ONA is "to produce effective and measurable research to ensure content, programmatic and methodological expertise."(Oxfam Novib Academy 2015a) The target participants for ONA are students at a Master's level who are looking to create more 'applicable research' for the field of international development.[7] This research was conducted by one of the student researchers from Oxfam Novib Academy.[8]

Oxfam Novib believes that VAW is "a human rights violation and a barrier to development."(Oxfam International 2012b) It endorses the United Nations

[4] 'Oxfam Novib - about Us - History' (Last updated 2013). Accessed 13/11/15 2015 <http://www.oxfamnovib.nl/history.html>

[5] "Through programs such as 'Guest at your table'(1963), Food for India(1966) and Sahel(1975) that invited Dutch public to contribute the cost of a meal for a day for someone in a developing country." (Oxfam Novib History, n.d.)

[6] Why gender justice comes under right to an identity? Needs critical questioning and has scope to be explored in further research.

[7] Oxfam Novib Academy, Progress Report, 2015

[8] More information about the author after conclusion.

definition of violence against women. It aims to end violence against women by rallying efforts and support towards advocacy for women friendly laws, providing support fro victims of violence, leading campaigns for change in societal norms and behaviors, empowering girls to stand up for themselves through education and income trainings, engaging men and boys to end VAW, ensuring protection of women's rights in times of humanitarian crises, mainstreaming VAW prevention in other sectors of development work and promoting women's leadership.[9] These interventions are carried out using Oxfam's rights based and transformative approach. This is a multilayered approach that promotes change on four levels – individual, collective, legal and social.

Women and girls learn to end violence in their own lives and to claim their rights = *individual empowerment*	Policies, laws and their implementation prevent and punish VAW, and ensure survivors obtain the support they need = *well implemented laws and policies*
Associations, movements and other social groups defend women's and girls' rights to a life in safety = *collective empowerment*	Societies say no to gender-based violence = *change in social norms*

Figure 2 Oxfam's Strategy of change (Oxfam International 2012b)

This participatory approach recognizes that everyone "has the right to shape their own development and public decisions that affect them."(Oxfam International 2012b) The approach underlines the importance of creating holistic change on all levels, 'it recognizes that one size does not fit all'[10](Ibid.) and that all the actors in the picture of change – the beneficiaries, legal systems, economic systems, society as well as development world are accountable for change.[11]

1.4 Situating the WECAN campaign (within Oxfam)

One such attempt to end violence against women was a campaign called WECAN,

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[9] Oxfam International 2012b

[10] Even though this is clearly stated in its report, Oxfam often uses the one-size- fits-all approach, as we shall see with the WECAN campaign that originally began in 'South Asia' and was then applied to DRC among other African countries.

[11] Oxfam International 2012

originally implemented in South Asia in 2004 for six years. The goal was to reduce social acceptance of VAW in the six south Asian countries that Oxfam works in. [12] The campaign believes that change is the responsibility of the individual and the individual has the power to change. But change is also a social process therefore it works on both individual and social level to reduce VAW. One of the central strategy's of the WECAN campaign was to create 'changemakers' – 'Changemakers are ordinary men and women from society, who are invited to make a public undertaking ' not to commit or tolerate violence and discrimination in one's own life, and to encourage at least 10 others to do the same.' (Oxfam International 2007) The aim of creating changemakers is to encourage men and women to identify violence in their own lives and find ways to address it through changing their own attitudes and behavior. The basis of the changemakers strategy is to put the onus of change on the men and women who are affected by the problem. Change is stimulated through thinking about VAW and understanding why this is wrong. While changemakers are not encouraged to impose actions on others, they are required to promote alternatives to violence and support women who are experiencing violence. What these change makers receive in return is support through campaign alliances and communication material as well as opportunities to exchange information and deepen their understanding of VAW. (Oxfam International 2007)

This campaign was extended to the Democratic republic of Congo in 2008. 'Nous Pouvons '(as called in Francophone Africa) was launched in Nord Kivu, Sud Kivu and Maniema provinces in October 2008 and in Kinshasa in January 2009. Despite ongoing conflict in the regions of Eastern DRC, more than 200 organisations registered as alliances and more than 5,000 people as 'change agents' (changemakers are called change agents in DRC)[13]. In the research that S carried out in Eastern DRC she explored the views and attitudes of men who were 'change agents' amongst others to get an understanding of attitudes regarding gender equality in Eastern DRC. The aim of the research was in no way, to evaluate the We Can campaign but to research the present attitudes towards gender equality in Congolese society.

1.5 Contextual background: Democratic Republic of Congo[14].

Located in central Africa, The Democratic republic of Congo is a country the size of Western Europe, the second largest in Africa and the 19th largest in the world. Boasting of an ethnic diversity of more than 250 ethnic groups and more than 240 different languages it is the one of the most linguistically and culturally

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[12] Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nepal.

[13] We Can Global Network Secretariat *'WE CAN End all Violence Against Women: South Asia Regional Campaign'*. Accessed 17/11/2015 2015 <http://wecanendvaw.info/global-we-can>.

[14] Situating Congo (DR) within the bigger sociopolitical dynamics of the world with the aim of explaining why aidland exists in Congo (DR).

diverse countries in the world[15]. Despite being one of wealthiest countries in the world in terms natural resources, a majority of its population continues to be economically and politically marginalized[16]. An ex-colony of Belgium, its 'historical injustices contingent on the greed and manipulation of leadership structures' (Ahere 2012, ACCORD), a legacy of colonial rule that spilt over into post-independence agreements, continue to cultivate and encourage suspicion among different ethnic groups. DRC has been mired in (and continues to be) brutal conflicts since the 1990's. Extreme violence, resource driven nature of conflict, massive displacement, sexual and gender based violence, involvement of neighboring countries and multinational actors characterize the very complex conflicts in DRC. [17]

The conflict began in part as a result of the Rwandan genocide of 1994. During the genocide an exodus of people fled from Rwanda into DRC. Most of the people were crossing the border at Gisenyi, entering Goma in eastern DRC. It is estimated that at the end of 100 days of the genocide about 12,000 refugees crossed the border per hour[18]. Camps for internally displaced persons (IDP) were often sites of horrible atrocities such as rape and killings that continued well beyond the end of the genocide. Soon after, the Rwandan armed forces infiltrated DRC and neighboring countries, giving birth to the Great African War or the Second Congo war in 1998. Coupled with poverty and inequality the war led to the rise of more than 20 armed groups with diverse political, economic and ethnic interests. The deadliest war in Africa, by the end of 2008, it had led to the death of more than 5.4 million people and many more displaced. In 2009, a peace agreement was signed in Goma and several of the armed groups were integrated into the national army of DRC (FARDC[19]). However, the peace was short lived. Owing to a weak government a group of ex-rebels deserted the FARDC and started a mutiny in April 2012 called as the M23 rebellion. Lasting for a whole year, this rebellion forced more than 140,000 to flee their homes. The M23 ended in November 2013[20] but not before reigniting relatively dormant groups such as the Mai Mai and the FDLR among others. These groups took advantage of the weakened government and began another wave of conflict, which is presently ongoing in parts of Eastern DRC. The different phases of the war in DRC were also known to be fuelled and supported by various Multinational corporations (MNC's) that had vested interests in obtaining mining concessions or contracts in the country that would have been more expensive in

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[15] Van Reybrouck 2014
[16] Ahere 2012, ACCORD
[17] Ibid.
[18] Slegh, H. et al. 2014
[19] Forces Armées de la République Démocratique de Congo.
[20] Ahere, 2012, ACCORD.

countries that were stable[21]. MNC's mineral exploitation strategies ranged from developing networks with key political and military and business elites to trading with rebels who set up financial and administrative bodies upon gaining control of minerals to earn revenue. The rebels and armed groups then used this revenue to 'to fund their participation in the conflict and to enrich themselves' (Ahere 2012) adding more complex facets to the conflict in DRC. The United Nations peace keeping forces have maintained themselves in DRC since 1999, and have reportedly spent more than US$ 8.73 billion to keep up the peace keeping effort. The International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) conluded that the crisis in DRC threatens peace and security in the entire Great Lakes regions and thus it has to be resolved at the earliest. However despite attention from African and global actors, DRC continues to experience immense violence and insecurity. [22] DRC ranks amongst the last countries on the Human Development Index with less than 2% of paved roads and with no access to potable water, for less than half of the population. Further, poor healthcare and high incidences of HIV AIDS causes high mortality with 56 years as the average life span of a Congolese person. [23] The society is highly patriarchal and bound with traditions and customs that often treat women as second-class citizens.[24] Sexual violence was often used as a weapon of war during these conflicts. A study in 2010, showed that approximately 24% of men and 40% of women had experienced sexual violence during the conflict in Eastern DRC alone[25]. Although exacerbated during the war, sexual violence existed before it and continues to exist inside and outside the home[26]. It stems from acute gender inequality and inferior position of women in the society. The recent gender index report from the OECD development center indicates that women in DRC are still facing inequality through discriminatory family and legal laws. They have restricted physical integrity as a result of rampant domestic violence, rape, sexual harassment at the workplace, limited access to sexual health and reproductive rights (SRHR) and no access to abortion. They also face restriction in terms of access to resources and assets such as land. Further inequality impedes civil liberties such as political participation and unlimited access to public spaces. Additionally, is a 'son bias' in society that limits girl's access to education and nutrition. The United Nations Development Program's Human Development Report, 2014 illustrates that DRC ranks amongst the worst five countries when with least favorable conditions of

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[21]Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Oxfam International (Last updated 2012) *'Democratic Republic of Congo'*. Accessed 17/11/2015 2015 <https://sumus.oxfam.org/node/30355>

[24] *'Social Institutions and Gender Index: Democratic Republic of Congo'*(2014) ,OECD Development center.

[25] Johnson, K. et al. 2010

[26] Slegh, H. et al 2014

living for women[27]. An extremely high maternal mortality rate, low gender equality index and high adolescent birth rate show that healthcare facilities and sexual reproductive health services need to be strengthened and developed in the country. Low levels of female literacy, and labor force participation as well as lack of political participation point out the need for programs that encourage female education and political empowerment. Thus, it can be concluded that DRC is a rich site for development work and development organization to provide assistance and aid.

1.6 Research questions and objectives

Research question:

Does engaging men in programs to change attitudes about gender equality empower women and to what extent?

In order to answer these questions, the following sub questions were addressed:

- What is the motivation for men to participate in programs that engage men for equality?
- What are the general attitudes about gender equality and gender roles among men/women/girls and boys?
- What does empowerment mean to women in Eastern DRC?

Objectives:
- Theoretical: Adding to the literature on the men engage movement.
- Social: Understanding perceptions around gender equality in Congolese society, especially in Eastern DRC.
- Policy: Recommendations for Oxfam Novib.

1.7 Methodological strategies and methods of data collection

Methodology: Semi- Structured interviews and Focus group discussions.
- 6 focus group discussions – 4 with men/women engaged in the above-mentioned programs. 1 with literate youth and 1 with illiterate youth.
- 40 interviews with a varied group of men and women to understand gender equality attitudes and gender roles, as well as meanings of empowerment.

All interviews and FGD's were conducted in French. A local staff member always accompanied the researcher during the interviews. All the interviews were

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[27] Human Development Report 2014, United Nations Development Program.

recorded with permission and went on for anywhere between 20 minutes to an hour.

1.8 Theoretical framework/ Method of analysis.

For the analysis of the data this research uses the Theory of planned behaviour. With its origins in social psychology, theory of planned behaviour[28] explains how behaviour interventions can bring about change. The theory states that human action is based on three main factors – 1. Evaluation of the behaviour as good or bad, ie. attitude towards the behaviour. 2. Perceived social pressure to perform said behaviour and 3. Perceived capability to perform the behaviour. Behavioural interventions have two objectives – the first is to motivate the behaviour and then to turn it into action.
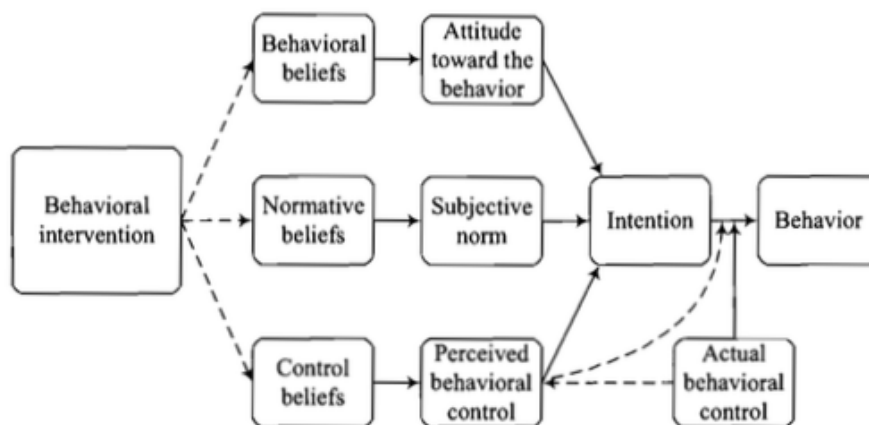
Figure 3 Expected effects of behavioral intervention in Theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 2011)

As illustrated in figure 3 for behavioral intervention turn into behavior (action) there needs to a strong intention to perform said behaviour. This intention is formed through the attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. These are in turn affected by behavioural norms, normative beliefs and control beliefs in a particular society.

However to bring about sustainable long term change it is not enough to only create the intention. As explained in this excerpt - " Individuals subjected to an intervention are exposed to new information or experiences that may well change some of their behavior-relevant beliefs and as a result affect their intentions and behavior. However the effectiveness of the intervention is not guaranteed. It is found to influence behavior; its effects should be traceable to changes in beliefs and as a result affect intentions and behavior. If the intervention fails to produce desired change then the theory of planned behavior can help identify the reasons for failure." (Ajzen, 2011)

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[28] Ajzen, 1991, 1998.

Behavioral interventions may fail for two reasons – 1. The intervention has no effect on the desired change in behavior, norm and control related beliefs or even if it has a change in these beliefs, the changes are offset by countervailing beliefs. 2. Even if there is a desired change in intention personal or environmental factors may prohibit the individual from translating the intention into behavior. Thus, it is not enough to only affect intention but also create a favorable environment for the intention to be carried out.

In his research on the role of theory on HIV prevention, Fishbein takes the theory of planned behaviour a step forward by combining it with other leading theories on behaviour change to create the integrative model.[29]
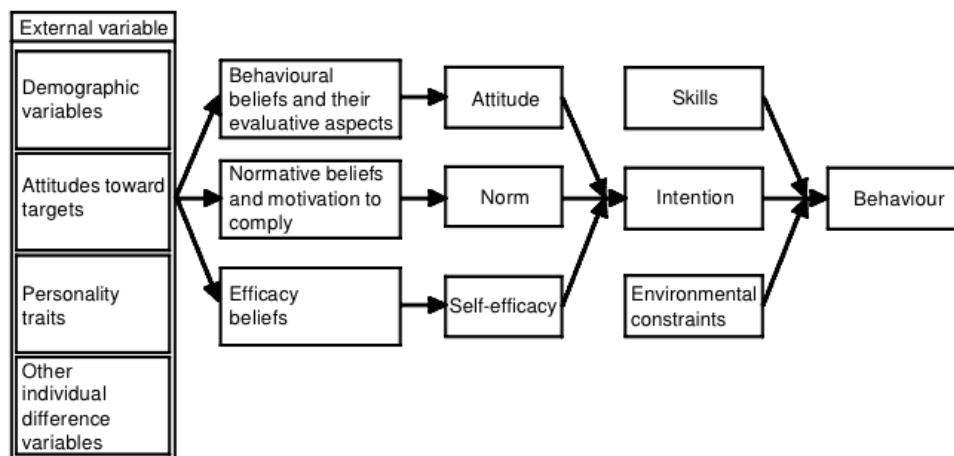
Figure 4 Integrative model (Fishbein, 2000)

In this model he emphasized that bringing about sustained change in behavior requires not one but three factors. " Indeed, if one has made a *strong commitment* (or formed a strong intention) to perform a given behavior, and if one has the *necessary skills* and the ability to perform the behavior, and if there are *no environmental constraints* to prevent the performance of that behavior, the probability is close to one that the behavior will be performed."(Fishbein, 2000) (Emphasis added).

Against the backdrop of these theories, this research attempts to point out the reasons for success or failure of the men engage program in question. The men engage program in question is the behavior intervention that aims to bring about change in men's behavior. Has the intervention created the intention for change in behavior? If so, are the other factors (skills to perform behavior and lack of environmental constraints) conducive for this intention to translate into changed behavior and beliefs? These are some of the questions that will be addressed in the analysis section.

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[29] M. Fishbein (2000) The role of theory in HIV prevention, AIDS Care, 12:3, 273-278

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Chapter 2 - Findings

For the purpose of understanding the findings they have been divided into 4 sections. The first section explores findings about men's engagement in the WECAN campaign from interviews with participants of the same. The second section looks at the status of women in Congolese society, exploring findings from second half of interviews with participants of the abovementioned programs and interviews with young men that were not part of the programs. The third section dives into the idea of empowerment to explore what empowerment means to Congolese women, thereby emphasizing the need for context specific understanding of women. And the fourth section brings us back to men engage, looking the importance of such programs from the perspective of women.

2.1 Men engaged

" Puisque nous croyons que si les hommes et les femmes sont égale, le development va suivre aussi"/ "Because we believe that if men and women are equal, development will follow as well."[30]

Motivations to engage:

In the focus group discussions conducted participants were asked about their motivations to engage in the men engage campaign WECAN. Although their responses were varied they all seemed to be particularly moved by sexual violence against women taking place in the different milieu around them. As one participant explained – *"Apres la guerre, la violence sexuelle est monté en* flèche *. Ces violences sexuelles n'etait pas arretés avec les conflits sur les terrains mais ils sont entrés meme dans les familles. Je suis pas a l'etat ou la communite international alors je peux pas engager avec les conflits sur terrains mais je pourrais essayer de diminuer les violences dans la famille."/ "After the war, sexual violence increased tremendously. These cases were not limited to the conflict zones but also entered the family. I am not part of the state or of the international community so I cannot engage with the conflicts on the ground but I can try to*

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[30] Male change agent #1, Focus group discussion (1) with changemakers, Bukavu, July 2015.

reduce the violence in the family." [31]

Yet others engaged in the campaign at their university. They were tired of the discrimination (especially against women) that they saw around them at university. They explained that the atrocities against young women ranged from the staff asking for monetary bribes to sexual favors. Failure to comply led to consequences anywhere between humiliations to refusal to grant the academic degree.

Some of the participants in the discussion were women and their motivations to engage in the campaign were similar to the men. One woman who was working with the government explained that the sexual harassment she faced at the workplace was what motivated her to join. "*Au niveau des femmes qui travaille et le chef et aussi dans des hauts mileus de service dans l'etat - Pour avoir un poste, il faut avoir coucher avec le grand chef. Pour le moment le problem de genre existe toujours" / " As a women, from the lowest level to the highest in the state – to get a post, one must have sexual relations with the boss. For now the gender problem still exists." [32]*
Another woman who works as a community agent in a rural area explained that the condition for women is much worse in rural areas, not only do they face sexual violence and the heavy burden of housework and work in the fields but they are often not even considered as human beings. *"Il y avait meme des restrictions alimentaire. Une femme ne peut pas manger du poulet, parce qu'elle est une femme." / " There are also restrictions with regards to food. A woman cannot eat chicken, because she is a woman." [33]*

Some of the male participants admitted that they considered women as inferior beings before becoming part of the campaign. "*Chez nous en Afrique, quand l'homme parle, la femme n'ose pas d'ouvrir sa bouche. Ce qu'on a appris."/ "Here, in Africa, when a man speaks, a woman does not dare to open her mouth. It is what we learned.*"[34] But after becoming part of the campaign they explain that they changed and now understand the value of a woman.

The next section will explore some of these changes.

What were the changes that you saw (in yourself and) around you after engaging in the campaign?

Most participants spoke positively about the changes that the campaign brought

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[31] Male change agent #4, Focus group discussion (1) with changemakers, Bukavu, July 2015.
[32] Female change agent #1, Focus group discussion (1) with changemakers, Bukavu, July 2015.
[33] Female change agent #2, Focus group discussion (1) with changemakers, Bukavu, July 2015.
[34] Male change agent #2, Focus group discussion (1) with changemakers, Bukavu, July 2015.

in their lives and around them. The participants who had engaged at university to fight against sexual harassment announced that the campaign led to a questioning of the negative practices in university. The young women began to denounce the sexual advances of certain professors and the student body supported them.

Due to sensitization efforts, the participants claimed to become conscious about their prejudices against women. While some of them now started helping their wife in household chores, yet other began to open their minds to possibility of women as earners. As one participant explained – *"Sur le plan economique, avant c'était impossible pour moi de permettre ma femme á travailler dehors la maison. Je pensais que les femmes qui travaillaient engager dans des relations sexuelles avec d'autres hommes. Mais j'ai changé mon avis après le campaign nous pouvons."/ "Before it was impossible for me to allow my wife to work outside the house. I thought that women who work outside enagage in sexual relations with other men. But I have changed my opinion after the WECAN campaign."*[35]

Around them the participants saw that thanks to sensitization efforts young boys started understanding that boys and girls must share household tasks and started helping their sisters at home. In some rural communities ' WECAN households' were created. A participant described what it was – *" Un ménage dans lequel l'homme sais que 'si ma femme est malade, je peut l'aider, si elle est parti aller puisser de l'eau, je peut lui preparer a manger'. Ce n'est pas un tabou comme avant que c'était les boulots des femmes."/ "A household where the man knows that if my wife is ill, I can help her. If she out to get water, I can prepare food. Its not taboo like before when these were all women's tasks."*

Yet another participant explained that he now discussed the budget of the house with his wife and they made decisions together as to how the money should be spent for the wellbeing of the household. Most of the participants encouraged education and work for women. Many even added that women who were educated and worked were well-balanced and good companions in a marriage because they understand the value of money.
During the focus group discussions few times the subject of 'women themselves being their own enemy' came up. *"Sensibliser la femme déja ce n'etait pas facile, elles on une manque de confiance personelle. Il faut beaucoup d'effort pour les faire comprendre qu'elles sont aussi capable que les hommes."/ "Sensitizing women was not easy, they have a lack of confidence. It requires a lot of effort to make them understand that they are as capable as men."*[36] Patriarchal attitudes amongst

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[35] Male change agent #3, Focus group discussion (1) with changemakers, Bukavu, July 2015.
[36] Male change agent #1, Focus group discussion (1) with changemakers, Bukavu, July 2015.

women were explained as one of the major obstacles faced by the participants who engaged in the campaign to stop violence against women.

In the next section we will look at some more of the obstacles they faced and how these were overcome.

Obstacles faced by 'change agents' and how they were overcome.

"Ce n'est pas une question de domination, c'est une question de comprehension."/ "It's not about domination, it's about comprehension." [37]

Often participants faced resistant from their community and even their own family members while trying to change roles in the household. Stories of neighbors and family accusing the participant as being 'dominated by his wife' were common. It would lead to a big discussion and even a scandal if not resolved soon enough. Some participants admitted that to avoid all this they would behave 'normally' when their family members were around. For instance one participant explained – *"J'aide ma femme dans le ménage, je prepare la cuisine le dimanche, quand j'ai le temps. Mais quand ma mere viens elle ne peut pas supporter que je travaille et elle commence a gronder ma femme. Ca commence toute une discussion dans la famille. J'essaye de les expliquer mais ils on tune certaine age, on ne peut pas changer leurs mentalities. Il vaut mieux changer les mentalities des enfants." / " I help my wife in the household, I cook on Sunday's when I have time. But when my mother comes to visit she cannot tolerate that, she starts scolding my wife and it becomes a big discussion in the family. I try to explain to them but they have reached a certain age, we cannot change their mentalities. Its better to change mentalities of children."[38]*

Different aspects from the above example seemed to repeat themselves in various interviews and discussions. Often older members of the family posed an obstacle to changing roles in the household. This is an important finding considering the importance that family and age hierarchy has in African cultures. When faced with this obstacle most participants would revert to traditional behaviours and direct their energy towards teaching future generations new roles. However, most participants did not take the fact that children would make note of this discrepancy in behaviour into consideration.

Most other obstacles in the community such as prejudices and superstitions were overcome through sensitization and role model behavior. For example one participant shared an anecdote that in his community it was believed that if men

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[37] Male change agent #2, Focus group discussion (1) with changemakers, Bukavu, July 2015.
[38] Male change agent #4, Focus group discussion (1) with changemakers, Bukavu, July 2015.

do 'women's work', they would grow breasts. He overcame this belief by doing women's work such as cooking, cleaning and bringing water for a month and showed the community that he did not grow breasts and was still 'very much (physically) a man' and his family was happier. The community was then more open to his message. Most participants agreed that 'practice what you preach' was the best way to change mentalities in the community and encourage positive behavior.

<center>*****</center>

Despite these positive responses to the first half of the interviews, as the researcher I couldn't shake off the feeling that many of the responses were very 'politically correct'. The respondents seemed to be saying what I wanted to hear. It didn't help that the local implementing partner of the WECAN campaign selected the participants for the focus group discussion and were present at all the discussion and interviews. Thus, for the second half of the interview I choose to ask more general questions about gender equality and status of women in society. These questions were framed in a light vein and often aroused laughter from the groups. However the responses given to these questions offered a glimpse into the limitations of change amongst the participants.

Further half way through the research process (after 4 focus group discussions and 10 interviews), I was denied access to more participants of the program due to an internal complication. In order to continue with the research then, I choose to interview/ conduct focus group discussions with young men and women in youth associations and members of the government in an attempt to understand the present condition of women and gender equality in the country - particularly in the region – Eastern DRC. The objective was to delve further into the particular context that the men engage program was dealing with so that it's limitations could be better understood.

The next section will present findings about the status of women as seen by participants of the men engage program, young people – university educated and less educated, minister for gender and family, local development workers, and journalists. This diverse group is taken as a representative sample for current and future generation of change makers in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. And although not all the views established in this paper were expressed by each and everyone of them, presented below is a collated view of gender equality in Eastern DRC.

2.2 Status of Women in Congolese society.

Just as the Congolese society is immensely diverse, the 'Congolese woman' is not a homogenous concept. Despite shared communalities every woman in the

society is differently implicated by the various intersections that affect her life. The next section while acknowledging its limitations of following a linear trajectory tells a story based on views of respondents, which paints a more or less generalized picture of the context of the Congolese woman, to help us understand where she comes from.

D'ou viens la femme Congolaise? / Context of the society with regards to women.

We live in a society with a strong customary influence. A woman is a housewife, a woman does not have any rights, a woman must stay in the kitchen and prepare food, she must give birth to children – it is impossible for her to understand that one must not have so many children, it is our cultural heritage. A woman has no rights – not to land, not to inheritance, she has no value in the family. It's almost as if one buys a woman. For many many years she was living in ignorance, she was not educated – the family did not want to invest in the life of a girl because it was understood that she would go to her husband's house and bring nothing to her natal family. But with time, little by little we understood that a woman occupies an important economic position in the family. She is the one who goes to the fields and cultivates the crops. After harvest, the husband who has not worked at all, comes and demands the returns from the harvest. She goes to the market sells her goods and comes back and gives all the hard earned money to her husband. She does not have a right to earn anything. But after a while she understands that it was her who made all the efforts but did not get anything in the end. She says – wait a minute – how is it possible that we do everything and we're treated like slaves, we contribute and we must get something in return. This is when they began to claim their rights, claim empowerment and autonomy for women. And this is when we a movement for women's rights. It was the eighties. It continued with the war and with the sexual violence done unto women during war. Women's bodies were used as weapons of war. The groups in the war had understood the place of women, the impact that women were having and could have. Eventhough customs and traditions did not want to accept it, practically they all saw the importance of women. If a woman did not go to the fields, there were no crops. If she did not go to the market, there were no goods sold – women work a very high percentage of agriculture and markets. And when our bodies were used as weapons of war, the society felt the imbalance. It led to the downfall of the society, of the informal economy; there was no manpower – the manpower was women. It was at this moment that we began *lutter comme diable dans l'eau bénite*/to struggle like a devil in holy water – to make the society see the place of a woman, to make men understand the importance of women, to claim women's rights. This is where the women's movements were born.

Today, women are hanging in between two contexts. One is the traditional, customary context and the other is the urbano-moderne/ urban- modern

context. A lot of changed for many women, but still a lot needs to be done. Young women who have the privilege of going to university are then limited by no access to jobs. Women have to constantly prove themselves to be capable. Society wants women to contribute financially but nothing is done about the responsibilities in the household. So now a woman has to work till 19h and then go home and cook, clean and take care of her husband and children. It's a double burden. These are the women who are privileged. In many rural contexts women are still struggling from day to day for survival. The fields are swamped with armed groups who continue to use women's bodies the way they please. When there is a war, women are the first victims. And this country is at war. It is war when there is unemployment, it is war when women have to sell their bodies so that their children don't go hungry, it is war when extreme poverty and insecurity make survival difficult for the majority of a population and it is war when nobody cares about this.

What according to you does a woman represent in Congolese society?
" Eduquer une femme, c'est eduquer toute une nation…" / "To educate a woman is to educate an entire nation." - Multiple respondents.

This old African proverb attributed to ghanian scholar Dr. James Emmanuel Kwegyir-Aggrey (1875-1927) was repeated in almost every interview or focus group discussion**.** As one of my respondents explained, women represent the family and the nation because they are responsible for a child's upbringing. If a child is brought up badly, the family will have a bad reputation and so will the nation. If a woman is educated well with the right values she will pass these on to her children and the nation will prosper. Thus, to educate a woman is to educate an entire nation. Multiple respondents voiced the view that women are considered the pillars of society. Majority of the respondents saw the primary role of a woman as that of a mother and a housewife. Women are responsible for the household and the family. Their roles were limited to the household – cooking, cleaning, and taking care of children.

While some respondents declared that *some* women now a days were capable of taking up roles outside the household to contribute financially they should be

Figure 5 Word cloud - what does a woman represent to Congolese Society?

careful about not neglecting their familial responsibilities. *"Il y a eu certaines changements mais il ya des barrieres que la societe n'est pas pret á affranchir par raport aux femmes."/ "There have been certain changes but there are also barriers that the society is not ready to overcome when it comes to women.*" Even though some women are encouraged to work, there are limitations as to what kind of work they do and for how long. For example one respondent explained that even though she is educated and her husband allows her to work, he doesn't like it when she goes on business trips. He prefers that she have a job that she can come home from at 16h and provide for the family. Women have to constantly fight to get their rights, they have to pave their way into professional domains and even once they are there, they have to prove their place again and again. Some respondents expressed that women are a weak and inferior and often an obstacle to the development of a country. They insisted that women should stay in their traditional roles as homemakers and provide the family and society with their motherly wisdom, as this is their strength.

What is a 'good' woman, and what is a 'good' man? Gender roles and responsibilities.

The table below lists participants' responses to roles and responsibilities of a 'good man' and a 'good woman', in a random order.

Table 1- Roles and responsibilities of 'good men' and 'good women'

A good man (is)	A good woman (is)
complimentary to woman	complimentary to man
respects women's rights	respects her household duties
friendly and faithful	friendly and respectful
provides for his family	earns for her family
treats women equally.	refuses to remain in the shadow.
fulfills his role as the head of the household	stands up during a crisis
non violent	virtuous
puts his family before his own egoistic needs.	does not give up her family for a career.
fulfils his wife's needs	obedient to her husband
Knows his responsibility towards the society	listens to her husband
respects the Constitution and the law.	respects the Constitution and the law.

accepts women as thinking beings.	a mother.

This question was formulated with the objective of uncovering views about gender roles and responsibilities among respondents. As shown in the table above a 'good man' is one who respects women, provides for his family, acts as the head of the household, fulfils his responsibilities toward his household, contributes to society and respects the constitution. While a good woman is a mother, she is one who takes care of her family and her children, who is obedient, prioritises her family over her career, but also someone who knows her rights and stands up for herself and her family especially in times of crisis.

The one thing that should not change in gender roles of men and women.

Table 2 - What should not change in roles of men and women

Men should always	**Women should always**
have the last word in making decisions.	support men in their decisions.
inherit land.	help cultivate the lands.
provide for his family.	put their role as a mother first.
satisfy their wife.	give birth to children.
marry women.	marry men.
stay out of the household tasks.	continue their household tasks.
behave like men.	behave like women.

This question was posed to peek behind the curtain of political correctness in views about gender roles. Despite changes in gender roles and responsibilities in the household and society if there was one thing that the respondents believed should remain the same - men should behave like 'men' and women should behave like 'women'. Most responses went back to traditional patriarchal roles of men and women. Men should marry women and women should marry men – on one hand points toward heteronormative ideals of society but on the other hand also goes back to the idea of men should be men and women should be women – thus men should marry 'women' i.e. good women, feminine, who fulfil their traditional roles and similarly for women.

The above section paints a rather grim picture about the status of women in Congolese society. Despite positive responses by participants of the men engage program(section 2.1) there seems to be little change when it comes to attitudes about gender roles and responsibilities. The society remains traditional deeply

entrenched in patriarchal norms that limit women to the domain of the household as mothers and housewives. The roles of breadwinner and provider for the family remains largely assigned to men, even though society sees that these roles are no longer being fulfilled by men (Lwambo, 2011). Women are now facing the double burden of having to provide for the family along with fulfilling traditional roles. Girls are now required to compete with boys on the job market and prove their capacity without any questioning as to how their traditional roles may often undermine their capacities. Women in urbano-moderne settings seem more privileged than their counterparts in rural areas but they have to face difficulties of a different kind. From sexual harassment at university to get grades to sexual harassment at the workplace to get a job posting – harassment is a reality even today in their lives. Thus, it can be concluded that just the intention to bring about gender equality is not enough. Change in behaviour without change in attitudes and beliefs does not lead to sustainable long term change. In order to change beliefs and attitudes it is important to first understand the context and structure of the society in question.

As one the respondents articulated – "*It's not about domination but about comprehension.*" Change in attitudes cannot be forced; it is a process that comes about through understanding the need to change and the benefits of this change. And most importantly by fitting the change to the particular contexts.

The above sections also shows that more and more Congolese women are aware of their rights and are demanding their rights. The discourse of women's empowerment has seeped into Congolese society and has become a buzzword in NGO's and households alike. But what does empowerment mean to women in Eastern DRC? Is it the same notion applied in the west or is it context specific?

The next section explores this very question, once again through the eyes of the women living in Eastern DRC.

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2.3 Empowerment, emancipation or autonomy ?

Bettering lives of women in Eastern DRC has been on the agenda of international NGO's for a few years now. One of the strategies most often used is that of women's empowerment. But what does this mean to the women in question? In an attempt to explore this the women interviewed were asked what empowerment meant for them.

The first finding was that the word 'empowerment' does not exist in Swahili or French, languages commonly used by the respondents. This finding led the discussion further. The words commonly used by the interviewees were 'emancipation' or '*autonomisation/autonomy*'. As explained by one respondent, the word empowerment "when translated directly to French translates into '*empouvoirment*' which means – to give the power to – this is often construed as

something negative. Giving the power to women would require men to give up their power and thus most men would resist. That's why we prefer to use autonomy or emancipation."[39]

Emancipation was viewed as women taking charge of their own lives. Most of them were positive to the idea of emancipation but pointed out how a lack of understanding of the concept can cause problems in society - " *many times when we talk about emancipated women, it seems like some of them are becoming like men, they start dressing like men, start behaving like men, forget their feminine sides and start behaving arrogant. It's important to work with this concept but do it well so that there are no cracks in the society. These are concepts that are good to use but should be used well.*"[40]

"*it's a good concept, but sometimes it remains just a slogan, when you look in the cities it may sees like it is working but in the villages it doesn't mean anything. It seems scary and out of context to the people there and they start getting defensive, so there is a lot to do. There should be laws to make the concepts of emancipation applicable.*"[41]

However some respondents were completely against the idea of emancipation -

"*D'alleuirs ce terme 'emancipation' je n'aime pas, elle fait tres ' a la civilization'. On a tendence a montrer que au depart la femme n'etait pas civilizer, et maintenant on fait tous pour la civilizer. Je crois que les realites du monde differ d'un pays a l'autre et peut importe le temps ou le courrant. Je crois que la femme a toujours etait emancipe, la femme congolaise en particulaire parceque meme en Europe la femme d'il y a un siècle est different de la femme d'aujhui, Nos grands meres leur facon de comporter dependait de la vie qu'elle mene et de leur societe, mais aujhui avec le modernisme tout le monde est en train de faire comme si elle va comporter ou vivre comme l'exige ce modernisme. Je pense que la femme congolaise n'est pas rester a cote, elle a tout fait pour s'habituer. Elle est en train de tout faire pour s'adapter au courrant du modernisme et pour moi l'emancipation c;est pas une problem pour la femme congolaise comme pour tout les femmes.*"/ " *I don't like the term 'emancipation', it sounds very much ' towards civilization'. It shows that in the beginning women were not civilised and now we're doing everything to civilise them. I believe that the realities in the world differ from one country to another, no matter the time. I believe that women have always been emancipated, particularly the Congolese woman because, even in Europe, women a century ago were different from women today. Our grand mothers behaved in ways that were appropriate for their times, but nowadays with the advent of modernity everyone is living as it is required by modernity. Congolese women have not remained behind, they are trying to adapt to this current of modernity. Thus for me emancipation is not a problem for Congolese or other women alike.*" [42]

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[39] Female particpicant, interview # 4, Bukavu, July, 2015.
[40] Female particpicant, interview # 4, Bukavu, July, 2015.
[41] Female particpicant, interview # 5, Bukavu, July, 2015.
[42] Female particpicant, interview # 7, Bukavu, July, 2015.

All respondents on the other hand, viewed autonomy (although limited to financial autonomy) as a requisite for bettering lives of women.

"Autonomisation de la femme est tres important parceque tous depend de l'economie."/ "Autonomy of women is very important because everything depends on the economy".[43]

Research shows that financial autonomy of the woman increases her bargaining power in the household (Kabeer, 1994) and many respondents seemed to reinstate this point : *" Dans le context actuelle de DRC, autonomisation de la femme est tres urgent parce que la femme elle a perdu son autonomisation. Elle a etait toujours co-dependent, avec tous que nous connaissons comme coutumes. Souvents nos coutumes sont retrograde et ca place la femme a niveau bas de la soc. Elle est considere comme une menagiere, machine a procreer, machine a faire des enfants. L'autonomisation va lui donner une place d'importance dans la famille et aider a revendiquer ses droits." / " In the present context of DRC, women's autonomy is urgent because women have lost their autonomy. Women have always been co-dependent because of backward customs that place them at an inferior position in the society. A woman is considered a domestic worker, a machine to create children. Autonomy is important as it will give women an important place in the family and help them claim their rights." [44]*

Thus, 'empowerment' as used on the international agenda has little or no meaning to women's lives on the ground. Change is required but it will only come about if done on their terms. Once again here emphasising the importance of context.

2.4 Men engage needed but...

"Il n'y a un collaborateur plus sure pour la femme que l'homme."/There is no greater collaborator for woman than men."[45]

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[43] Female particpicant, interview # 5, Bukavu, July, 2015.
[44] Female particpicant, interview # 9, Bukavu, July, 2015.
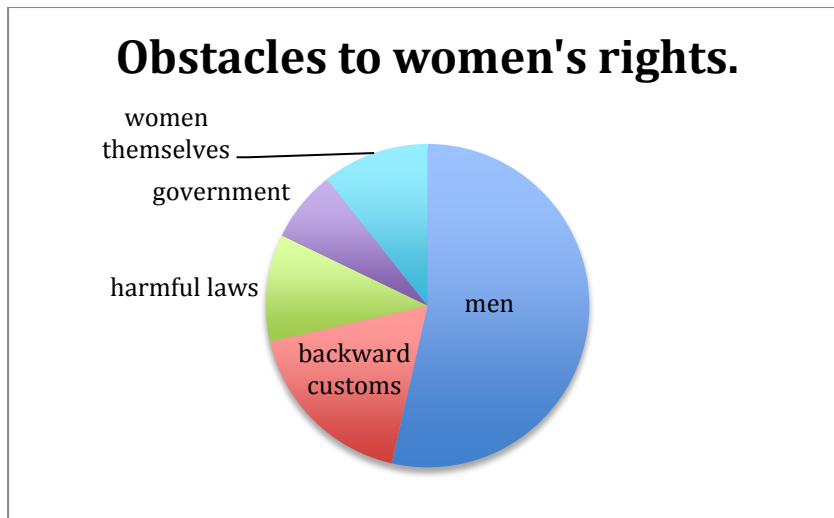[45] Female particpicant, interview # 4, Bukavu, July, 2015.
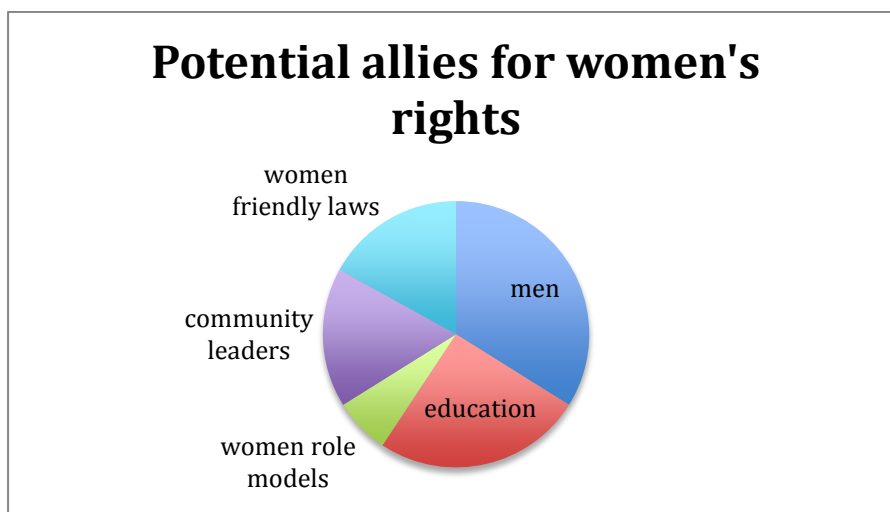
Figure 6 Obstacles to women's rights

Figure 7 Potential allies for women's rights

As seen from the above figure 6 and 7 most respondents identified men as the main obstacle in the struggle for women's rights. However, majority of the respondents also see men as potential allies. Thus, it is necessary and important to engage men in the struggle for bettering women's lives. " *Les hommes peuvent freiner l'access des femmes aux droits. Meme si elle veut changer, il ne le permet pas. C'est important de comprendre que les hommes sont l'uns des actuers pricipaux pour le changement. Lorsque le papa ne comprends pas que sa fille doit aller a l'ecole rien ne marchera. Progressivement il faut ammener les hommes a comprendre que il ya des hommes et des femmes et des particularites des deux, et c'est tres important que on donne aux femmes l'oportunite de participer et de contribuer. Par examples les lois legaux sont discriminatoire, ils donnent plus de pouvoir aux hommes et pas assez aux femmes. Le loi dit que l'homme est le chef. Meme les luttes pour changer les lois doit impliquer les hommes et ils doivent comprendre que ca c'est bien pou tout le monde. Parce que si c'est juste les femmes qui sont tousjours la pour revendiquer leurs droits sans impliquer les hommes, ils*

vont se presenter comme des barriers. L'implication des hommes dans tous les niveux c'est tres important pour avoir l'equilibre et harmonie dans la societe. "/"Men can be barriers to women's access to rights. Even if she wants to change anything he doesn't allow it. It's important to realize that men are one of the main actors for change. Unless the father understands that his daughter must go to school, it won't work. Gradually we must make men understand that there are men and women and both have their particularities and its very important that we give women the opportunity to participate and to contribute. For example – many laws are discriminatory against women, they give more power to men. The law says that men are the boss. Even the struggles to change these laws must implicate men. They must understand that it is for the well being of everyone. Because, if it is only women always fighting for their rights without engaging men, they will present themselves as barriers. Engagement of men at all levels is needed to have balance and harmony in the society."[46]

However it is important to make sure that men engage programs do not come at the cost of other programs that may be more important in a particular community. It is important to take into account the context and priorities in the community. As one respondent explains – *" Les ONG viennent, ils implement des projets mais les projets ne sont pas sustainable, une fois l'attention sur le sujet est reduit le projet est fini et une fois que le projet est arête, c'est fini. Par example – une ONG international avais commence une campagne, il y a dix ans, pour l'education des filles. Mais récemment l'attention est reduit, mais malhereusement le probelme n'est pas parti. Meme si les parents on compris qu'il faut envoyer les filles a l'ecole, le problem c'est de maintenir les filles en ecole parce qu'elles tombent encients. Mais ce n'est plus la priorite. " / "NGO's come and implement projects but the projects are not sustainable, once the attention on the subject is reduced, the project is stopped and everything is over. For example – 10 years ago an INGO started a campaign for girls' education. Recently the attention on this has reduced but the problem has not. Even though parents may have understood that they must send their girls to school, the problem now is to keep them in school, because many of them fall pregnant. But it's no longer a priority…" [47]*

Although there was a general consensus throughout the interviews that it is important to make men a part of the change. Some women reiterated that even if they were well educated and allowed to go outside and work, when they came back home they were required to enter the traditional gender roles. While on the other hand some women expressed that they experienced more violence after attending women empowerment programs. Thus, it is certain that leaving men out the story is not helping anyone. However only creating the intention amongst

[46] Female particpicant, interview # 14, Bukavu, July, 2015.
[47] Female particpicant, interview # 11, Bukavu, July, 2015.

some men to change is not enough to bring about that change. Other factors such as creating conducive environments to enable gender equitable behaviour and reducing resistance against gender just behaviour is also required simultaneously. The next chapter will analyze the above findings using the Theory of planned behavior and provide recommendations for policy and practice. However, organizations must proceed with caution to take into account the context of the community and the environment that they are working in. It is also important to frame the programs such that men are not portrayed as perpetrators, as this has shown to bring about animosity amongst participants of men engage programs[48].

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[48] Lwambo, 2011, *"Before the war I was a man": Men and Masculinities in Eastern DR Congo,* Goma: HEAL Africa.

Chapter 3 - The way forward

3.1 Analysis of findings

As stated in the chapter 1, section 1.8, the theoretical framework used to analyse the findings of this research is a combination of theories of behavioural change. It states that to bring about sustained change in behaviour through behaviour interventions, it is not enough to create the intention for change. Translating the intention to change into action that results in sustained behaviour change requires skill, i.e. the ability to perform the behaviour and a lack of environmental constraints preventing new behaviour.

Through the findings it is evident that even though the participants of the men engage program WECAN – showed the presence of 'intention' to change, there seemed little change in attitudes and beliefs about gender equality and women. In addition to that they faced environmental constraints such as ridicule from the community or anger from the family. Men who had been giving extremely positive responses about gender equality and status of women within the preview of the program, gave very different responses to questions that demanded a rearrangement of traditional norms or gender roles. As if to say - Men and women should be equal but women should be less so. Women still have an inferior role in society and are considered second-class citizens. Despite some occasional transgressions the traditional of gendered division of labour remains fixed. Certain class of women have the privilege of accessing higher education and work opportunities but they are limited by constraints such as familial roles and gender discrimination at the workplace. While some men have come to accept women as thinking beings and understanding their value in society, women still have a limited say in decision-making. The picture that evolves is of a society that is deeply patriarchal entrenched in inequality based on gender and class. While there are signs of change with a few women realising their rights and a few men opening themselves up to the possibility of a more equal society, the process seems to be moving forward at a snails pace.

Changing behaviour on the long term requires change in attitudes and norms of society. However it is most important to emphasise that change in norms or attitudes still has to be done within the context of a particular society. Congolese society like many other societies in the global south is collectivistic society. They have a different structure from western societies – community and family are at the centre, not the individual. This is very important to keep in mind when making behaviour interventions in any society. The aim should be to bring about positive changes that better lives of not only the individual but also the community. These changes must be envisioned with the harmony of society in

mind and not with disruption. The section on women's empowerment highlights this. The women interviewed had very different notions of empowerment. First of all most women rejected the word empowerment and choose instead to use emancipation or autonomy. This already shows the difference in context at work, women want more autonomy; they want to be in charge of their lives and make decisions for their families but within the community. They see their place in the bigger community as part of it and separate from it. Further research is required on this very rich idea of emancipation of women within a community, the scope of this research does not allow for that, the example is merely used to illustrate women's hopes for the future and the importance of contextualizing programs.

3.2 Limitations of analysis:

This analysis has certain limitations - using the TPB model creates a crude and rather simplistic understanding of change in society. It "disabuse(s) the formalist 'delusion that agency can be incentivized to operate independently of political economy"(Craig and Porter, 2006 as cited in Mosse 2011) It says nothing about gender analysis, or intersectionality or the fact that the model is based on a very individualistic, ahistorical and non-contextual view of behavior and change. It's basic and very flawed assumption is that, change in behavior leads to change in structures of society. "Gender inequality is structured into the organization of social relations in a society as fundamentally as class in capitalist societies, race in apartheid South Africa and caste in India."(Kabeer, 2015) Changing gender roles by encouraging men to help out in the household is not going to dismantle patriarchy. Further the context of DRC as a conflict zone adds to the complexity of gender roles in society.[49] An in depth intersectional analysis is required to explore the very rich material that was collected through this research. How class affects equality and opportunities for men and women? Who were the women who are able to access education and jobs and what kind of jobs? What are the inequalities faced by men? How do the different intersections of class, age, and conflict affect their roles both real and 'assumed'? - Are some of the pertinent issues that come up through this research. However, the scope of this research paper does not allow me to go into depth in these issues.

In exploring assumptions of the research, it is also pertinent here to point out some pitfalls that the development organization falls into. For instance: In engaging men to end violence against women, men are often framed either as perpetrators or as collaborators in the fight against violence and hardly ever seen as victims of violence themselves. This becomes even more blasphemous in the context of DRC where there have been the highest numbers of recorded instances of GBV against men.[50] While the WECAN program in DRC, as well as the

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49 Bushra 2003
50 Baaz, M.E. and M. Stern 2008

participants of the research consider men as collaborators for a gender equal society, there is a lack of "reference to men as gendered human beings in their own right, formed, privileged but also damaged by patriarchal rule."(Reynders, forthcoming) [51] According to Reynders (forthcoming) this 'instrumentalist approach to men' is also advocated by the UN campaign for equality HeforShe that led too much of an uproar in the men engage movement. Thus, gender inequality needs to be seen as a structural issue and not something that can be solved with a campaign. It requires a questioning of the dominant frameworks of masculinity and femininity that are often damaging to both men and women. Changing these dominant frameworks requires a change in ways of viewing the world by both men and women. For instance as seen in examples above the men who started helping their wives in the house were often ridiculed by the community and even their own wives. Women are as much entrenched in patriarchal roles as men.

3.3 Conclusion

Even though the process is slow, the fight for gender justice is progressing in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Even though the participants of the WECAN program may not have changed their attitudes and norms in their communities, the intention to open change for a better society is a big step in the right direction. Some indicators of gender equality seemed to be improving the underlying gender inequality persists[52]. Engaging men for gender equality and a gender just society is a requirement. However, changing attitudes and norms about gender inequality requires an intersectional and simultaneous effort on the various factors that underlie inequality. Engaging men or women does not automatically change lives of women the socio-cultural contexts in which these lives unfold must be taken into account. Furthermore just because something is a buzzword on the global agenda, priorities in the local communities must not be side-lined. After all, as Jan Reynders reminds us "Gender and gender inequality is not a project that can be fixed with money. The problems of the world's multi-inequalities are very structured and deeply entrenched in our daily lives and hence our responses must also be well structured, but along new lines of thinking and behaving. It means that the language, methods and approached for the transformation to justice must carry the ingredients that are required in the new situation." (Reynders, forthcoming) And this new situation must be built, by first of all, acknowledging the paradoxes and contradictions in the everyday

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[51] Reynders, J. (Forthcoming) 'Where are the Men? Reflections on Manhood, Masculinities and Gender Justice', in W. Harcourt (ed.) *Bodies in Resistance: Gender in Neoliberal Times,* London: Palgrave.

[52] Naila Kabeer & Caroline Sweetman (2015) Introduction: Gender and Inequalities, Gender & Development, 23:2, 185-188

realities of the contexts that we are working in. While these contexts may be ever changing, there is hope on the ground for a better tomorrow. As expressed in the words of a 13 year old Congolese girl - *" La societe Congolaise est caraterisée par plusieurs maux mais aussi des vertues. La pauvreté, l'absence de l'autorité étatique, la corruption, les guerres, l'insecurité… sont autant des maux qui gangrenent son quotidian. Cependant c'est une societé éprise de justice, qui espere a un meilleur lendemain, qui veut se relever et aller de l'avant. Tous qu'il faut faire c'est de passer des souhaits et des aspirations aux actions concretes pour que ce changement soit affectif. Car si quelqu'un peut changer la societe Congolaise, c'est bien le congolais lui-meme." /" The Congolese society is characterized by many faults but it also has virtues. Poverty, absence of the state authority, corruption, war and insecurity are the problem of that destroy the everyday of our society. However, we are a scoeity moved by justice, we hope for a better tomorrow, this society wants to progress. All we need is to move our aspirations to concrete actions to bring about an effective change. Because if someone can change the Congolese society, it is the Congolese people themselves." [53]*

3.4 Recommendations for Oxfam Novib

🔸 ***Engage not only men but all actors of society to bring about gender equality***
Given the findings of the above research it is evident that while there has been considerable progress in bettering lives in Eastern DRC, there remains a long way to go. The responses of the men's forum of the WECAN campaign show that there is an intention to bring about change although, surrounding factors in the environment inhibits the intention from changing into action. Oxfam's strategy for change as mentioned earlier in the report shows that Oxfam uses a multilayered approach that promotes change on four levels – individual, collective, legal and social. In this particular case it seems that work on the collective level can be strengthened. As seen from the findings, often women themselves are obstacles to gender justice. For example as seen in the findings of the research, often mothers serve as gatekeepers of patriarchal practices thereby disallowing their sons to contribute in housework. This is because both men and women are entrenched in patriarchal structures that diversely affect everyone in the society. This understanding needs to brought into implementation of projects – making the fight of men and women against patriarchy and not men against women or vice versa.

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[53] Female participant, Interview# 33, August, 2015.

🔸 *Engage men for themselves – Not only #HeforShe but also #HeforHimself* -
If we accept that both men and women are adversely affected by patriarchy then we need readdressal mechanisms to undo the harm that patriarchy does to men as well. This is especially required in contexts of conflict such as DRC where there is the maximum recorded instances of violence against men. Assistance to victims of violence needs to be extended to men as well. In addition to appropriate mental and physical counseling services, safe spaces and forums need to be created that allow men to share and heal. As mentioned in the research, in times of conflict men are often not able to fulfill their traditional provider roles and this not only leads to conflict in the household but also fixing of traditional gender roles by men, to assert authority. Further, women themselves have high expectations of men and question their masculinity if they are not able to fulfill traditional roles. Conforming to norms of femininity and masculinity exerts undue pressure on men and women. A dialogue must be started between men and women and amongst men and women to requestioning these harmful norms and practices.

🔸 *Close attention to contexts – One size doesn't fit all –* A recurring theme in the research is the importance of contexts. Projects cannot be implemented in a one size fits all manner and must to conceptualized or re-conceptualized to fit the contexts in which they are implemented. Although Oxfam claims to pay attention to particular contexts, it can do better in this regard. Further, the paradoxes of everyday in different contexts must be taken into account and built upon to bring about change instead of brushing them under the rug. For instance, the everyday obstacles faced by the men who were participants of the WECAN campaign reveal the everyday contradictions in their lives. Or, in another example where the some women are able to access jobs but are limited in their progress by domestic as well as societal factors unveil the paradoxes in their lives. Furth more, looking closely at class differences amongst men and women would also provide a better understanding of contexts. Congolese women just as men are not a homogenous category and acknowledging their diversity would be the first step towards bringing about long lasting change.

🔸 *Broadening the scope of gender justice –* Achieving gender justice as a long-term goal requires a dismantling of patriarchy. This involves a questioning of not only traditional norms of masculinity and femininity but also heteronormative structures of society. While we encourage men and women to live in harmony in society we must consciously involve

other genders and sexual orientations as well. Unless rights are not considered as rights for all human beings, the fight for gender justice remains incomplete. Oxfam Novib strives to bring gender at the heart of everything it does, however 'gender' often remains limited to women. Here there is a huge scope for improvement. Aim 5 – Right to an identity must include the fight for identities of other genders and the fight for the right to other sexual orientations. These struggles need to be led simultaneously and not in order of priority. Because as Audre Lorde rightly puts it – " There is no such thing as a single issue struggle, because we do not live single issue lives".

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Appendices:

- **Interview Questions:**

For young men – Youth group.
1. Selon vous qu'est- ce que la femme represent pour la societe Congolaise?
2. Quels sont les roles typique aux femmes et quells sont les roles typique aux hommes, et est-ce que ca peut changer?
3. Aider vous votre femme/soeur/ mere dans le ménage? Si oui, pourquoi et sinon pourquoi?
4. Selon vous qu'est- ce que c'est 'un vrai homme' et 'une vrai femme'.
5. Que pensiez- vous des femmes qui ont etudie et les femmes qui travaillent?
6. Selon vous qu'est qu'il faut changer dans les attitudes/comportement des hommes/femmes aujourd'hui?
7. Si vous devrez choisir, quell est la seule chose qui ne doit jamais changer entre les hommes et les femmes?
8. Quel est la situation actuelle en ce qui concernent egalite homme/femme dans votre pays?
9. Quels sont les urgencies actuelles dans votre vie?
10. Decrivez en bref la contexte de votre societe, selon vous.

For young women – Youth group – same as above +

11. Que signifie les mot 'empowerment'/ emancipation/ autonomisation pour vous?

For journalists + Ministre:

1. Selon vous qu'est- ce que la femme represent pour la societe Congolaise?
2. Quels sont les aspects de votre vie que vous aimeriez rendre plus autonome?
3. Selon vous qu'est- ce que c'est 'un vrai homme' et 'une vrai femme'.
4. Que'est- ce que le mot 'empowerment' signifie pour vous?
5. Selon vous qu'est qu'il faut changer dans les attitudes/comportement des hommes/femmes aujourd'hui?
6. Si vous devrez choisir, quelle est la seule chose qui ne doit jamais changer entre les hommes et les femmes?
7. Que pensiez vous des projects pour engager des hommes pour egalite?
8. Quel est la situation actuelle en ce qui concernent egalite homme/femme dans votre pays?
9. Quels sont les urgencies actuelles dans votre vie/ votre societe?

- **Focus group discussion questions.**

Group: Men who have not engaged.

12. Selon vous qu'est- ce que la femme represent pour la societe Congolaise?

13. Quels sont les roles typique aux femmes et quells sont les roles typique aux hommes, et est-ce que ca peut changer?
14. Aider vous votre femme dans le ménage? Si oui, pourquoi et sinon pourquoi?
15. Selon vous qu'est- ce que c'est 'un vrai homme' et 'une vrai femme'.
16. Que pensiez- vous des femmes qui ont etudie et les femmes qui travaillent?
17. Selon vous qu'est qu'il faut changer dans les attitudes/comportement des hommes/femmes aujourd'hui?
18. Si vous devrez choisir, quell est la seule chose qui ne doit jamais changer entre les hommes et les femmes?
19. Vos filles, vont-elles a l'ecole?
20. Quels sont vos reves et ambitions pour vos filles?
10.Dans quels circumstance vous vous engagriez dans une campagne pour ameliorer la vie des femmes?

Group: Men who have engaged
1. Quel etait la motivation pour vous de vous engager dans le campagne nous pouvons et quels sont les changement principaux grace a cet campgane dans votre vie?
2. Selon vous qu'est- ce que la femme represent pour la societe Congolaise?
3. Quels sont les roles typique aux femmes et quells sont les roles typique aux hommes, et est-ce que ca peut changer?
4. Aider vous votre femme dans le ménage? Si oui, pourquoi et sinon pourquoi?
5. Selon vous qu'est- ce que c'est 'un vrai homme' et 'une vrai femme'.
6. Que pensiez- vous des femmes qui ont etudie et les femmes qui travaillent?
7. Selon vous qu'est qu'il faut changer dans les attitudes/comportement des hommes/femmes aujourd'hui?
8. Si vous devrez choisir, quell est la seule chose qui ne doit jamais changer entre les hommes et les femmes?
9. Vos filles, vont-elles a l'ecole?
10. Quels sont vos reves et ambitions pour vos filles?

Group: Women who have not engaged.

1. Selon vous qu'est- ce que la femme represent pour la societe Congolaise?
2. Quels sont les roles typique aux femmes et quells sont les roles typique aux hommes, et est-ce que ca peut changer?
3. Quels sont les aspects de votre vie que vous aimeriez rendre plus autonome?
4. Selon vous qu'est- ce que c'est 'un vrai homme' et 'une vrai femme'.
5. Que signifie le mot 'empowerment' pour vous?
6. Selon vous qu'est qu'il faut changer dans les attitudes/comportement des hommes/femmes aujourd'hui?
7. Si vous devrez choisir, quell est la seule chose qui ne doit jamais changer entre les hommes et les femmes?
8. Vos filles, vont-elles a l'ecole?
9. Quels sont vos reves et ambitions pour vos filles?

10. Dans quels circumstance vous vous engagriez dans une campagne pour ameliorer la vie des femmes?

<u>Group: Women who have engaged.</u>
1. Quel etait la motivation pour vous de vous engager dans le campagne nous pouvons et quels sont les changement principaux grace a cet campgane dans votre vie?
10. Selon vous qu'est- ce que la femme represent pour la societe Congolaise?
11. Quels sont les roles typique aux femmes et quells sont les roles typique aux hommes, et est-ce que ca peut changer?
12. Quels sont les aspects de votre vie que vous aimeriez rendre plus autonome?
13. Selon vous qu'est- ce que c'est 'un vrai homme' et 'une vrai femme'.
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16. Si vous devrez choisir, quelle est la seule chose qui ne doit jamais changer entre les hommes et les femmes?
17. Vos filles, vont-elles a l'ecole?
18. Quels sont vos reves et ambitions pour vos filles?

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