TOOL C1: GENDER NORMS AND PRESSURES

AIM

By the end of the session, participants will have:

▶ A better understanding of the impact of norms of masculinity and femininity on the lives of men and women.

▶ Identified the ways in which gender norms of masculinity and femininity affect women's political participation.

STEP-BY-STEP

1. Introduce the activity by presenting its aims. Explain the importance of looking more closely at the norms and pressures of masculinity and femininity in order to understand barriers to women's political participation.

2. Break the large group into smaller groups of 5-6 people each. Options for dividing into smaller groups include:

   ▶ By age or level of seniority

   ▶ By geographical location where staff work or live

   ▶ By gender - if there are a sufficient number of women in the training, invite them to form their own small group.

3. Give each group two sheets of flip-chart paper. Ask each group to draw a large box on each of their sheets of paper, marking one box "The Man Box" and the other "The Woman Box".

4. Ask each group to discuss the following questions for about 30 minutes, writing down their answers as indicated below:

   ▶ For The Man Box:

      ➜ *What are the messages that men get about what it means to be a man?* Write these inside the box.

      ➜ *What are the social expectations of masculinity that men are supposed live up to?* Write these inside the box.

      ➜ *In what ways are these messages and social expectations of masculinity different for different groups of men (based on age, marital status, economic circumstances, educational level and so on)?* Write these on a separate piece of paper.

Time: 90 mins

Materials:
▶ Flip-chart paper and pens
▶ Handout C1.1: Patriarchal Masculinities in Practice
▶ Handout C1.2: The Meanings of Power

Training Tips:
✓ This activity can be very effective in helping men understand the harmful impacts of norms of femininity on the lives of women, and the benefits men gain from conforming to norms of masculinity. You can highlight the contrast between women's and men's experiences of gender norms by placing the Woman Box and Man Box side-by-side, and look at the differences between them in terms of impacts of norms.

✓ It is likely that you will be using this activity with an all-male group . Men may find it difficult to do the Woman Box, because they do not fully appreciate the harms that women suffer from norms of femininity. Thus, it is important to emphasize that this activity looks at men's perceptions of the impact of gender norms on women. You can enhance the discussion by sharing any information, research and personal testimonies that you have about the harmful impacts of gender norms on women, especially in relation to political parties and processes.

- → *How do men benefit from conforming to these messages and social expectations?* Write these inside the box.

- → *How are men harmed by conforming to these messages and social expectations?* Write these inside the box.

- → *What happens to men who do not or cannot conform to these social expectations and messages?* Write these outside the box.

► For The Woman Box:

- → *What are the messages that women get about what it means to be a woman?* Write these inside the box.

- → *What are the social expectations of femininity that women are supposed live up to?* Write these inside the box.

- → *In what ways are these messages and social expectations of femininity different for different groups of women (based on age, marital status, economic circumstances, educational level and so on)?* Write these on a separate piece of paper.

- → *How do women benefit from conforming to these messages and social expectations?* Write these inside the box.

- → *How are women harmed by conforming to these messages and social expectations?* Write these inside the box.

- → *What happens to women who do not or cannot conform to these social expectations and messages?* Write these outside the box.

5. After 30 minutes, or when the small groups have finished their work, bring the groups back together. Ask each in turn to present their Gender Boxes, and discuss using the following questions, using the information in the Handout to guide the discussion:

► *How patriarchal are these messages about and social expectations of masculinity and femininity (in reinforcing men's power and women's subordination)?*

► *How do these messages about and social expectations of masculinity and femininity affect the behavior of men and women in your party/organization?*

► *How do these messages about and social expectations of femininity limit women's lives and affect their participation in political life?*

► *How do these messages about and social expectations of masculinity benefit men, in terms of their personal lives and their involvement in political life?*

► *In what ways may these messages about and social expectations of masculinity limit or restrict men, in terms of their personal lives and their involvement in political life? What incentives do men have to reject patriarchal messages about and social expectations of masculinity?*

► *In what ways do* women *refuse* to conform to *messages and social expectations of femininity that harm their lives? What happens* to women *who refuse* to conform *to harmful gender* norms *of femininity?* How can men *support* women *who refuse* to conform to *harmful gender* norms of *femininity?*

► *In what ways do men refuse to conform to messages and social expectations of masculinity that limit their lives? What happens* to men *who refuse* to conform to *restrictive gender* norms of masculinity? How can men *support other* men to *refuse* to conform to *restrictive gender* norms *of masculinity?*

6. End the session by going over the main points in the Handout C1.1: Norms and Harms of Patriarchal Masculinities. Emphasize the different ways in which these restrictive Gender Boxes damage not only women's lives and participation in political life but also limit men's lives in different ways. If there is time, use Handout C1.2: The Meanings of Power to introduce the concept of power-over relationships. Make the following points:

   ► The patriarchal masculinities of the Man Box and the subordinate femininities of the Woman Box are based on a power-over model of human relationships

   ► In order to change this and promote women's greater political participation, we need to focus on other models of power: women's power-within and power-to, and the collective power-with of women and men working together to end patriarchal practices.End the session by summarizing what has been discussed in terms of the importance of and ways to challenge and change patriarchal masculinities now.