

# MenEngage Call for Action: Post-2015 Agenda



**MenEngage is a global alliance of NGOs and UN agencies that seeks to engage boys and men to achieve gender equality. We have a global steering committee with representation from all over the world and different regional networks in Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America, South Asia and Europe. We believe in working with boys and men from a positive perspective and encouraging them to be full partners in fostering a world where peace is possible, violence is reduced and equality is achieved.**

This Call for Action outlines MenEngage’s priority goals within the Post-2015 Development Agenda<sup>1</sup> as well as suggested indicators for inclusion in the measurement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The engagement of men as allies in achieving gender equality often receives little mention in the development frameworks (particularly the Millennium Development Goals). Yet, a broad and growing base of evidence shows that effectively engaging men for gender equality can have significant benefits for women, children and men themselves.<sup>2</sup>

Promoting healthier and more equitable gender norms with regards to manhood and developing public policy aimed at engaging men and boys have been shown to inter alia: improve men’s and women’s access to HIV treatment and other health services; reduce men’s violence against women and children; increase men’s support of their partners in accessing health services; reduce the disproportionate burden of domestic tasks on women; increase men’s involvement in

their children’s lives; engage men as partners in women’s economic empowerment; achieve more equitable relationships at the household, community and societal levels; and reduce homophobia and discrimination towards LGBTI people.

Work with men and boys is therefore integral to the new global Post-2015 Development Agenda, and in particular to maintaining the momentum on addressing gender inequalities, strengthening human rights, promoting women’s empowerment and leadership and improving the health and wellbeing of all.<sup>3</sup>

We believe in a strong focus on women and girls as part of the new SDGs. We view these recommended indicators and commentary on the goals to be a complement not a replacement to the gender goal suggestions put forth by agencies like UNWomen. This Call for Action can be used as a policy advocacy and programming tool to strengthen a focus on engaging men for gender equality within the Post-2015 Development Agenda. Its key audiences are local, national, regional and global civil society, policymakers, UN agencies, donors and other decision-makers.

# MenEngage's key priorities and suggested indicators

Goals	MenEngage Key Priorities	MenEngage Suggested Indicators
<b>1.</b>  <b>End poverty</b>	1.1 Engage men as partners in efforts to improve women's economic empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % of men who tell their partners what they earn</li> <li>• % of men and women who report joint financial decision-making</li> <li>• % of men's income dedicated to the household</li> <li>• % men who support their partners' work/income generation</li> </ul>
<b>2.</b>  <b>Empower girls and women and achieve gender equality</b>	2.1 Work with men and boys to prevent GBV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % of youth who witness and/or experience violence in their household</li> <li>• % of men who hold rape supportive attitudes</li> <li>• % of men who know about existing GBV laws</li> <li>• % of men who support existing GBV laws</li> <li>• % of children with paternal registration at birth</li> <li>• # of average weekly hours spent providing care for children and others</li> <li>• % of men living apart from biological children who make regular financial contributions</li> <li>• % of men compliant with state regulations related to child support</li> <li>• Number of countries with paternity and maternity leave</li> <li>• % of children under five with access to quality state-supported childcare</li> </ul>
	2.2 Encourage men's contribution to caregiving	
<b>3.</b>  <b>Provide quality education and lifelong learning</b>	3.1 Engage the education sector in addressing gender inequality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % of boys and girls who complete secondary education</li> <li>• % of youth who support gender equality</li> <li>• % of youth who hold homophobic attitudes</li> <li>• % of schools offering gender equality education programs</li> <li>• % of youth who participate in gender equality education programs in secondary school</li> <li>• % of youth who witness or experience violence in their educational environment</li> <li>• # of countries that have outlawed corporal punishment</li> <li>• % of boys and girls who hold rape supportive attitudes</li> <li>• % of schools who provide psycho-social support to children</li> <li>• % of teachers trained on gender transformative educational practices</li> </ul>
	3.2 Increase comprehensive gender equality and rights education in schools for both boys and girls (which includes GBV prevention)	

Goals	MenEngage Key Priorities	MenEngage Suggested Indicators
<b>4.</b>  <b>Ensure healthy lives</b>	4.1 Address men's health and health-seeking behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Life expectancy (men compared to women)</li> <li>• DALY (men compared to women)</li> <li>• % men who visited health clinic in the past year</li> <li>• % of men who sought testing for HIV</li> <li>• % men tested who return for their results</li> <li>• % of men who support their partners' contraceptive use</li> <li>• % of men who view contraceptive use as a joint responsibility</li> <li>• % of men who accompany their partners to a prenatal visit</li> <li>• % of men present during childbirth</li> </ul>
	4.2 Engaging men as supportive partners in the promotion of SRHR, maternal health and in the prevention of HIV	
<b>11.</b>  <b>Ensure stable and peaceful societies</b>	11.1 Engage men and boys in efforts to end GBV in conflict and post-conflict settings (including large scale psycho-social support)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % men with stable employment after conflict</li> <li>• % of unemployed men ashamed due to lack of work</li> <li>• % of men, women who experienced traumatic event due to conflict</li> <li>• % of men using physical/sexual violence post-conflict</li> <li>• % of men and boys who have witnessed and/or experienced sexual violence</li> <li>• % of men demonstrating psychological effects of conflict</li> <li>• Number of countries offering comprehensive mental health services in post-conflict zones</li> <li>• Number of countries implementing violence prevention interventions post-conflict</li> </ul>



## Goal 1: End Poverty

### 1.1 Key priority: Engage men as partners in efforts to improve women's economic empowerment initiatives

Economic empowerment of women and girls is hindered by rigid gender norms and discriminatory laws and policies. Women's low status in society, as well as their unequal access to education, legal protection, and economic opportunities, coupled with poor sexual and reproductive health outcomes and experiences of sexual and domestic violence, has perpetuated gender inequality and limited women's decision-making power. At the same time, increasing income and job instability among men has resulted, in some cases, in a backlash against women, including in the form of violence.

Given that economic empowerment and microcredit programmes reach between 100-125 million individuals

worldwide, more than 90% women, such programmes could be a tremendous entry point for engaging men.<sup>4</sup> Studies show that engaging men as partners of female beneficiaries of micro-credit programmes leads to: more equitable household decision-making; increased couple communication; decreased couple conflict; and higher income gains for families.<sup>5</sup>

MenEngage calls for economic empowerment, income generation and microcredit programmes targeted at women to either include men's participation, or to establish separate groups targeting men within these programmes.



## Goal 2: Empower Girls and Women and Achieve Gender Equality

### 2.1 Key priority: Work with men and boys to prevent gender-based violence (GBV)

GBV is a violation of human rights, and compromises physical, emotional and mental wellbeing. The high levels of gender-based violence around the world are inextricably linked to stereotypical masculine gender norms and unequal power relations between men and women. Gender norms can socialise men to think that it is acceptable to: respond to problems with violence; abuse alcohol; and control and dominate their partners. Gender norms can also make it unacceptable for a man to seek help or to express feelings

of fear or vulnerability. In order to prevent GBV, it is therefore important to work with men and women to change the social norms perpetuating GBV, including by providing alternative and non-violent role models for young men and boys and supporting men to take a stand against GBV.<sup>6</sup>

MenEngage calls for programmes and policies focusing on preventing violence against women to include a focus on engaging men as partners, allies and potential victims.

### 2.2 Key priority: Encourage men's contribution to caregiving

Fatherhood, and more generally, men's contribution to caregiving and unpaid domestic labour, provides a tangible opportunity to improve gender equality. Women carry out a disproportionate share of care-related activities worldwide, including domestic work and childcare, thus limiting their potential to earn income, and perpetuating income and social inequalities between men and women. Encouraging men's participation in this care work contributes to alleviating the burden of care on women. When fathers are involved in their children's lives at an early stage, preferably starting at birth, there is a higher likelihood that they will

remain connected to their children throughout their lives. Men can then contribute both in terms of care work and finances to the household for the lifetime of the child, further reducing the burden of care and financial responsibility often left to the mother alone.

MenEngage calls for a scaling-up of the global MenCare campaign, and for programmes and policies to encourage men's greater contribution to caregiving, and for improved maternity and paternity leave globally and other state supports for the care of children.



## Goal 3: Provide Quality Education and Lifelong Learning

### 3.1 Key priority: Recognising the education sector for its critical role in addressing gender inequality

Recent studies show that younger men and men with higher levels of education (completed secondary education and above) reported more gender equitable attitudes, less use of violence, and higher rates of participation in care work.<sup>7</sup> However, education systems have also been found to perpetuate and reinforce traditional and inequitable gender norms, and to be settings for violence against both boys and girls. Research also shows that boys who are strongly connected to school through various activities such as music, dance, sport, or other such activities, are able to use these avenues to challenge stereotypical and harmful constructions of masculinity and femininity and have greater freedom to explore gender equitable behaviours.<sup>8</sup> Given this, the education sector needs to be recognised for its critical role in addressing harmful gender attitudes and practices, and in creating a sustainable shift in cultural

norms, particularly for boys and young men. Therefore, gender equality should ideally reach and guide all levels of the education system.

MenEngage calls for education sector policies and practices to promote gender equality, including by challenging harmful stereotypes about men and women, and by adapting school curricula to promote healthy notions of masculinity and femininity and so that it advances gender equality. Education programmes should incorporate basic principles of a gender equitable teaching-learning experience. All teacher-training curricula should contain gender training and an emphasis on the importance of the engagement of parents, including fathers, in school governing bodies and through community outreach.

### 3.2 Key priority: Increase comprehensive sexuality and rights education in schools for both boys and girls

Comprehensive sexuality and rights education for young people can lead boys and girls to make positive, healthy choices about sex and contraception and promote more healthy and equitable relationships. Traditionally, sexuality education in schools tends to focus very narrowly on girls. This means communities are missing a key opportunity to engage young men in gender-sensitive initiatives, which is key to their own awareness of sexual and reproductive health and critical for the needs of their partners.

MenEngage calls for current sexuality and rights education to be broadened to include a stronger focus on engaging

boys and young men, both to increase their own awareness of sex, sexuality and human rights, and to educate them about the needs and rights of others. This education should also address human rights and gender equality, offering accurate and complete information, such as the range of female controlled contraceptive methods, and also focus on positive sexuality, LGBTI issues and building skills for negotiating sexual behaviour. Making access to contraceptives and information on sexual and reproductive health and rights available only to girls can no longer be accepted practice in educational systems.



## Goal 4: Ensure Healthy Lives

### 4.1 Key priority: Address men's health and health-seeking behaviour

The top ten contributors to the global disability-adjusted life-years (DALY) actually present greater burdens on men than women. Addressing these challenges is important for everyone's sake: while it is bad for men's health, it also places expensive and unnecessary burdens on women and on health systems. Rigid gender norms may increase men's vulnerability to illness and injury and create reluctance to seek critical health services. This reluctance stems, in part, from traditional gender norms and conceptions of masculinity, which equate ill-health with weakness. These rigid gender norms also increase men's vulnerability to ill-health by, for example, encouraging men to equate manhood with risk-taking, having power over women and the pursuit of multiple sexual partners;<sup>9</sup> and make it less likely that they will access critical services such as HIV testing, treatment and psycho-social support.<sup>10</sup>

Structural barriers can also prevent men from accessing health services. These barriers include ill-equipped and unwelcoming clinics, negative attitudes from healthcare providers, lack of confidentiality, and a lack of training and skills on male-specific health issues. When men do not utilise health services, it puts them and their partners at risk.

MenEngage calls for a stronger focus on addressing men's health within national policies and guidelines, as well as UN and international agreements. Efforts to better address men's health and health-seeking behaviour should include the transformation of gender norms that equate risk-taking with manhood and illness with weakness. Health systems must play an active role in promoting improved health-seeking behaviour by men. This transformation will have benefits for the lives of women, men, and children.

### 4.2 Key priority: Engaging men as supportive partners in the promotion of SRHR, maternal health and in the prevention of HIV

In many parts of the world, sexual and reproductive health (SRH) is largely considered the sole responsibility of women. This leaves women and girls to bear the burden of their own and their families' SRH, allowing too many men to neglect their own SRH needs and responsibilities. While we must continue to support and promote accessible SRH services and freedoms for women, we must also place attention on the specific role of men and boys as partners in SRH.

Men, as well as women, will benefit a great deal from such attention: interventions with men and boys on SRH have been shown to effectively increase men's support for their

partner's SRH, address gender inequality which can cause women and girls to be more vulnerable, and to improve the health of men, women and children. It must always be emphasised that men's roles as partners should be supportive, and should always respect women's rights over their own bodies and choices.

MenEngage calls for a greater focus on engaging men as supportive partners in the promotion of SRH, particularly in prenatal and antenatal maternal health, the prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) of HIV, and in the roll-out of new HIV prevention technologies.



# Goal 11: Ensure Stable and Peaceful Societies

## 11.1 Key priority: Engage men and boys in efforts to end GBV in conflict and post-conflict settings (and roll-out of large-scale psycho-social support interventions)

Most programmes addressing GBV prevention and response in conflict and post-conflict settings currently focus primarily on women and girls. They currently do not focus enough on the need to address the root causes and drivers of violence, which must include addressing boys and men as well. However, while men and boys are part of the problem in relation to such violence, they also experience substantial trauma themselves. Addressing men's own experiences of violence allows them to become part of the solution.<sup>11</sup> Gender norms transformation work is imperative to address generalised cultures of violence, in which men demonstrate their masculinity through violence against women, children and other men.

MenEngage calls for interventions in conflict and post-conflict settings to ensure that men play a positive role in changing attitudes towards female and male survivors of GBV, in advocating for perpetrators to be held accountable for their crimes, and in transforming the norms of their respective societies, so that GBV - both in and out of war - becomes a thing of the past.<sup>12</sup> Given the high exposure to multiple forms of violence during conflict, MenEngage also calls for a large-scale roll-out of psycho-social support that enables men, women, boys and girls to overcome this trauma.

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## End Notes

<sup>1</sup>A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies Through Sustainable Development', Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda (2013).

<sup>2</sup>See for example Barker G et al. 'What men have to do with it: Public Policies to Promote Gender Equality', Men and Gender Equality Policy Project, coordinated by the International Center for Research on Women and Instituto Promundo, p. 3 & 'Policy Approaches To Involving Men And Boys In Achieving Gender Equality And Health Equity', prepared by Sonke Gender Justice Network for the Department of Gender, Women and Health, World Health Organisation, (June 2010), p. 9.

<sup>3</sup>'Policy Approaches To Involving Men And Boys In Achieving Gender Equality And Health Equity', prepared by Sonke Gender Justice Network for the Department of Gender, Women and Health, World Health Organisation, (June 2010), p. 9.

<sup>4</sup>Barker G and Peacock D, 'Working with men and boys to promote gender equality: A review of the field and emerging approaches', Paper presented at the UN Women Expert Group Meeting in Bangkok (2012).

<sup>5</sup>Slegh H, Barker G, Kimonyo A, Ndolimana P and Bannerman M, 'I can do women's work': reflections on engaging men as allies in women's economic empowerment in Rwanda', Gender & Development, 21:1, (2013) pp. 15-30, accessed at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13552074.2013.767495>

<sup>6</sup>Findings within 'Programming to address violence against women, 10 Case Studies', UNFPA, p. vi, accessed at: [http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2007/vaw\\_10cases.pdf](http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2007/vaw_10cases.pdf)

<sup>7</sup>Barker G, Contreras J.M, Heilman B, Singh A.K, Verma R.K, and Nascimento M, 'Evolving Men: Initial Results from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES)' (January 2011), Washington, D.C.: International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) and Rio de Janeiro: Instituto Promundo.

<sup>8</sup>UNESCO Bangkok, 'Role of Men and Boys in Promoting Gender Equality – Advocacy Brief' (2004), p. 5, accessed at: [http://www2.unescobkk.org/elib/publications/Role\\_of\\_Men\\_and\\_Boys/Role\\_of\\_Men\\_and\\_Boys.pdf](http://www2.unescobkk.org/elib/publications/Role_of_Men_and_Boys/Role_of_Men_and_Boys.pdf)

<sup>9</sup>Le Grange G, 'Taking the bull by the horns: working with young men on HIV/AIDS in South Africa', in Sandy Ruxton (Ed.), Gender Equality and Men: Learning from Practice, (Oxford, 2004), accessed at: [http://www.oxfam.org.uk/what\\_we\\_do/resources/downloads/gem-12.pdf](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/what_we_do/resources/downloads/gem-12.pdf), p. 104; Sathiparsad R & Taylor M, "Diseases come from girls": perspectives of male learners in rural KwaZulu-Natal on HIV infection and AIDS', Journal of Education, vol. 38 (2006), p. 187; Varga C, 'How Gender Roles Influence Sexual and Reproductive Health Among South African Adolescents', Studies in Family Planning, vol. 34(3), 2003, p. 55; Harrison A, O'Sullivan L.F, Hoffman S, Dolezal C & Morrell R, 'Gender Role and Relationship Norms among Young Adults in South Africa: Measuring the Context of Masculinity and HIV Risk', Journal of Urban Health: Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine, vol. 83(4), 2006, p. 718; Dunkle K.L, Jewkes R.K, Brown H.C, Gray G.E, McIntyre J.A & Harlow S.D, 'Gender-based violence, relationship power, and risk of HIV infection in women attending antenatal clinics in South Africa' (2004), Lancet, vol. 363(1), pp. 1410-1, cited in Redpath et al, 'Masculinities and Public policy in South Africa: Changing masculinities and working toward gender equality' (October 2008), p. 19.

<sup>10</sup>Magongo B, Magwaza S, Mathambo V & Makhanya N, 'National Report on the Assessment of the Public Sector's Voluntary Counselling and Testing programme' (Durban: 2002), Health Systems Trust; Redpath J, Morrell R, Jewkes R & Peacock D, 'Masculinities and Public policy in South Africa: Changing masculinities and working toward gender equality', A report by Sonke Gender Justice Network (October 2008), p. 19.

<sup>11</sup>MenEngage-UNFPA (2012), 'Sexual Violence in Conflict and Post-Conflict: Engaging Men and Boys', MenEngage-UNFPA Advocacy Brief. New York.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.