MenEngage Alliance at the 59th session of the Commission on the Status of Women

Dear MenEngage members and partners,

The 59th Commission on the Status of Women took place from 9-20 March 2015. It was a historical one as we commemorated the 20th anniversary of the 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing, which marked the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. MenEngage was well represented through the activities of the members of the alliance and the global secretariat.

Find below a summary report on 1) the results of this CSW; 2) attention on working with men and boys on gender justice; and 3) events and joint advocacy activities by the MenEngage Alliance.

Two things stand out:

- It has been encouraging to see the broad support voiced at this CSW for engaging men and boys. Many women and men supported this as an important piece of the puzzle to achieve gender equality – for women and girls, but also for men and boys themselves. And often it was expressed that gender equality is for all genders – it is a matter of humanity.

- MenEngage members organized many activities, including collaboratively. We joined strengths during caucus meetings, developed joint messages, strategized on how to influence the negotiations and discourse through our governments, developed various statements together and participated actively in panels to share our messages. This CSW has been a landmark moment for building up the MenEngage movement!

These trends are relevant, as the annual CSW is an important global space where advocates and experts from around the world gather, interact, listen & learn, and go home with new thoughts and ideas. It is an occasion when the international discourse on gender equality from across the world can be observed – and changed. Sharing information and building alliances for joint advocacy are key strategies to contribute - even in small steps - to these processes of change.

Thanks for reading this report, and do not hesitate to reach out by sharing more of your own news, your thoughts, your suggestions, your next points of action, etc.

Kind regards,

Joni van de Sand
Global Coordinator & Advocacy Manager
MenEngage Alliance Global Secretariat
joni@menengage.org
www.menengage.org

*Photo credit: Humans of CSW59*
1. Agreements / outcome documents of CSW59

The inter-governmental negotiations during this CSW focused around two sets of agreements:

1) Political Declaration on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women. Find the full text here.

We are happy to see a paragraph is included on engaging men and boys. It says that “the Ministers and representatives of Governments having gathered at CSW59”:

“11. Recognize the importance of the full engagement of men and boys for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, and commit to taking measures to fully engage men and boys in efforts to achieve the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action;”

This paragraph was not proposed in the first draft, but suggested by the government delegation of Colombia. The proposal met with broad support from other member states, who in turn strengthened the language. The paragraph goes beyond the sentence that was initially proposed about the individual responsibilities of men and boys, to include responsibilities of “duty bearers” - Ministers and representatives of Governments – to take action.

Other positive language references are to the need for transformation, including of social norms: “Pledge to take further concrete actions […] including through […] the transformation of discriminatory norms and gender stereotypes and the promotion of social norms and practices that recognize the positive role and contribution of women and eliminate discrimination against women and girls” (para. 6); and recognition that “a transformative and comprehensive approach in the post-2015 development agenda” is essential for achieving the unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals, including through “the sustainable development goal on gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls […] and also through integrating a gender perspective into the post-2015 development agenda” (para 7).

However, there was also firm critique of the process by which the Political Declaration came about, and dissatisfaction across civil society with the content of the declaration. Contentious issues were the recognition of women’s and girls’ “human rights” – which is included in the text but was often taken out; of “feminist groups”, “women human rights defenders” and “movements” – these were all taken out; and of the role of civil society – which was included but not as strongly as we would have liked. What we see is that delegates from Russia, the African Group, CARICOM, Saudi Arabia, and the Holy See (Vatican) actively raised their voices against these issues.
NGOs struggled to influence the process, mainly because the negotiations took place in the weeks before CSW, when Ministers and government representatives from the countries and the overall majority of civil society activists weren’t yet in New York. Consequently, civil society was largely excluded from negotiations which resulted in the Political Declaration. Overall, these are problems of accountability: it is a particular irony that women’s organizations should be excluded from the substantive work of the CSW, the “annual commission of the status of women”.

In response, almost 1000(!) civil society advocates and organisations, including MenEngage Alliance, signed onto a statement lambasting the UN and Member States for their lack of political will and commitment to women’s human rights, saying that the Declaration “represents a bland reaffirmation of existing commitments that fails to match the level of ambition in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.” You can read the full statement and its sign-ons here.

2) Working Methods for future CSWs

Governments attending the CSW agreed on new working methods for the Commission to continue setting standards related to the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and strengthen its role in global policy-making and coordination of actions around implementation. The working methods resolution is not available online yet, but you can read an article by UN Women here, and keep a keen eye on the website here.

MenEngage members worked on a joint set of advocacy messages during our caucus meetings (see below) in line with messages developed by women’s rights advocates from around the world. These included:

1. Civil society participation should be included in CSW negotiations, and the role and expertise of women’s organizations and feminist groups should be recognized;
2. CSW should have a role to review progress of the Sustainable Development Goals from a gender-perspective;
3. CSW needs to stay focused on gender equality, women’s and girls’ empowerment as matters of human rights;
4. Negotiations must take place during CSW, not before when gender-experts from capital, ministers, and civil society are excluded.

What are the results? The text could have been stronger, but it is not a loss compared with earlier working method agreements. In fact, some of the actual practices that were never written down have now become official through this document - for example, that civil society organizations get a chance to speak at the General Discussion (see below). However, we would have liked to see more explicit agreements on meaningful participation of civil society, in particular from women’s organizations and feminist groups. For example, the three-minute speaking allotment at the end of the Commission, when many government officials as well as NGO representatives had left, was not the most meaningful participation imaginable. Read a more detailed analysis of the results here on the blog of WO=MEN Dutch Gender Platform.
2. Attention for engaging men & boys

As one CSW59 attendant tweeted “Throughout the #CSW59 the issue of involving men and boys has been highlighted in almost all meetings! It’s either on the panel or a comment.” Indeed there was a lot of attention for engaging men and boys at this CSW. One of the official meetings was a panel discussion on The responsibility of men and boys in achieving gender equality. That same day another official panel was organized on Changing social norms to achieve gender equality: expectations and opportunities, where there was significant attention for transforming patriarchal norms and the roles of men and boys in doing so. Many side- and parallel events were organized, many of them by MenEngage members and their partners. (For more information on these events, see section 3.)

Engaging men and boys was often mentioned during events, by women (the overall majority of attendants at CSW are women) and men, as an important tool for changing social norms and empowering and improving the rights of women and girls. You can read an article by the Institute of Development Studies that describes the trend here. It was also regularly mentioned that men and boys can gain or benefit from changes in patriarchal social norms. For example, during the panel on Changing Social Norms “Participants added that everyone has a role to play, including men and boys, women and girls, religious and community leaders, public and private sectors, as well as civil society organizations in changing social norms. Participants highlighted the need to engage specific groups of the community with greater determination, including older women who may have suffered a lifetime of discrimination. Men and boys should be engaged as both beneficiaries of and protagonists in making change.” Click here for the chair’s summary of the panel including this quote.

MenEngage Alliance has addressed the increased attention for engaging men and boys in a balanced way. In our interventions during panels, through social media outreach, and in the messages developed and shared among members, we have consistently welcomed this trend as a way to address patriarchal norms at their roots, in order to transform the underlying causes of gender inequalities. We have also encouraged our membership and partners not to see work with men and boys as the next silver bullet, and to always bear in mind the end-goal: gender justice. There are many, complementing and mutually strengthening approaches, to achieving that goal, of which working with men and boys is one.

MenEngage’s oral statement during the official program of CSW highlights these points, including:

| 4. There has been a lot of attention for engaging men and boys at this CSW. We welcome that. We welcome that the Political Declaration includes a paragraph. Overall, we hear a lot of excitement. However, projects are often small-scale and short-term. It is time to implement and scale-up. We are calling for institutionalization of work with men and boys in policies and programs – in schools, the work-place, and in creating an enabling environment at home. |
| 5. Investments in engaging men and boys should not detract from other effective strategies, especially those undertaken by women’s organisations. We reject attempts to weaken our alliances or to put complementary approaches in competition with one another. We call on policy makers and donors to dramatically increase the resources available for all gender justice work. |
3. MenEngage activities

MenEngage members organized many activities at CSW59, including collaboratively. We came together during caucus meetings, developed joint messages, strategized on how to influence the official process through our governments, developed various statements together and participated actively in panels to share our messages. This CSW has been a landmark moment for the MenEngage movement!

Written statement*

In advance of CSW, MenEngage shared the alliance’s key advocacy points in a written statement. This was part of the official package that all government delegations received in preparation of CSW. The statement was based on the publication “Men, Masculinities and Changing Power: A discussion paper on engaging men in gender equality from 1995-2015” launched at the Second MenEngage Global Symposium in Delhi, in November 2014. You can find the designed version of the written statement here and the official UN-codified version here.

Brochure

MenEngage brought the alliance’s key advocacy messages and asks together in one brochure. Around 600 copies were distributed among CSW participants, as well as among participants of the International Conference on Men and Masculinities that took place the week before CSW. The brochure includes:

- Summary and key asks from the “Men, Masculinities and Changing Power” publication;
- Suggested indicators on engaging men and boys for gender justice in the Sustainable Development Goals framework;
- The Delhi Call to Action; and an
- Overview of what the Global MenEngage Alliance is, contact details and how to become a member.

All include links to their full publications. You can download the brochure here.

Stepping it up

MenEngage members spoke out for gender equality and women’s rights on March 8 at the UN Women-organized Planet 50-50 by 2030 - Step it up for Gender Equality, a march for gender equality and women’s rights in commemoration of the 20-year anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and International Women’s Day.

You can see more pictures of MenEngage members and partners participating in the march on the alliance’s facebook page, in the album International Women’s Day 2015 @ New York City.
MenEngage caucus meetings

**Monday 9 – Friday 13 March 2015**

Every day from 9:30-10:15 AM during the first week, the MenEngage Global organized a check-in meeting for members and partners at the UN Church Center, where most civil society parallel events take place. This was a space to briefly share updates on negotiations, observations from panels, and strategize for the rest of the day.

**Monday 9, Tuesday 10, and Thursday 12 March 2015**

MenEngage Global organized a “caucus meeting” on engaging men and boys at the headquarters of UNFPA. It was a space for members and partners to meet, reflect on trends at CSW, develop messages and strategies to reach out to our governments and strengthen the outcomes and the discourse of this year’s Commission. One concrete activity was the joint analysis of the Political Declaration and the Working Methods resolution, and strategizing how best to respond to this in partnership with women’s rights organizations and feminist groups from across the world. Another activity was developing the oral statement and intervention during official CSW meetings: we shared the draft statements and jointly strengthened them. This process of joint writing was continued by e-mail. The results can be found below under oral intervention & statement.

**Side events**

**Wednesday 11 March 2015**

MenEngage Global organized one side-event, together with UNFPA and the governments of Sweden, Vietnam and Rwanda. The event was very well-attended – so much so that some people were unable to enter the room.

Panelists included representatives from various governments of Sweden, Kate Gilmore from UNFPA, and Tomas Agnemo representing the MenEngage Alliance.

Tomas (Director of Men for Gender Equality Sweden; MenEngage Global board member; and co-coordinator of MenEngage Europe) explained how the MenEngage Alliance is organized. He highlighted many of the diverse aspects of our work, including on engaging men and boys to prevent gender-based violence; improve sexual and reproductive health and rights for all; and enhance fatherhood and caregiving roles. He made a plea for a gender transformative approach in the Sustainable Development Goals, and called on governments and UN agencies to work with civil society – including MenEngage members – to work on those. You can find all the points he made [here](#), which gave him a round of supportive applause from the audience – in particular look out for the last quote.
There were two interventions from the floor by MenEngage members:

- Erin Stern presented the EMERGE project. Engendering Men: Evidence on Routes to Gender Equality (EMERGE) is a two-year project to build an openly accessible basis of evidence, lessons and guidance for working with boys and men to promote gender equality, due to be completed by early 2016. This is potentially a great resource for MenEngage members and the broader field.

- Alla Tshetsanyana Kgakole-Moyo presented on the work of the NAC Men Sector of the Government of Botswana. She is also co-chair of the MenEngage Botswana Steering Committee.

Other events on engaging men and boys

Many MenEngage Alliance members and partner organized parallel-events during the two weeks of the CSW. The MenEngage Global Secretariat maintained a spreadsheet overview of events and shared it with members to ease the difficult task of decision making about which event to attend. You can find the overview here.

Intergenerational Dialogue
Friday March 13 2015, all day

UN Women organized “a conversation among various gender equality advocates and stakeholders across generations to discuss strategies and perspectives that can accelerate the achieving of gender equality by 2030.” You can read and see more about the event here. Several MenEngage members and partners played a role. There were scheduled interventions from the floor by Anthony Keedi (ABAAD Lebanon) and Harish Sadani (Men Against Violence and Abuse - MAVA, India). The afternoon session was moderated by Dean Peacock representing Sonke Gender Justice, also co-chair of the MenEngage Global Board.

Oswaldo Montoya, Networks Manager at the MenEngage global secretariat participated in the afternoon panel on “Strengthening civil society: Intersectionality; Inclusiveness; Influence”. He shared some of the challenges promoting men’s activism in Nicaragua when unexpectedly they realized that half of the members of the first Men’s Group Against Violence were openly gay and defied the heterosexist dominance within the organization, prompting them to critically reflect on homophobia and its role in the perpetuation of patriarchal masculinities. The men’s activists in Nicaragua learned that if they are going to challenge machismo they have to confront homophobia and embrace an inclusive agenda, learning to work together among straight, gay and other men and in partnership with women’s rights organizations. He also shared how women’s organizations challenged activist men to reach out to other men in the communities and not only limit their activities to internal work within their men’s groups, since a balance between the personal and the public work must be achieved. As a conclusion he mentioned three lessons learned:
- We need to practice listening and remain accountable to women’s rights organizations and other historically oppressed social groups.
- We need from women’s rights advocates a combination of support and challenge regarding our work and practices.
- One common issue here is about building trust, among women and men, among straight men and gay men, among cisgender people and transgender people, among whites and people of color, among the global north and the global south.

You can watch the video from that panel [here](#).

**Panel 4 - The responsibility of men and boys in achieving gender equality**

*Monday March 16 2015, 10 AM – 1 PM*

Panelists included Gary Barker representing Promundo and MenEngage Alliance; Bafana Khumalo representing Sonke Gender Justice (coordinating member of MenEngage Africa); Natko Geres representing Status M Croatia (member of MenEngage Europe); and Henry MacDonald, Permanent Representative of Suriname to the United Nations. As the issues paper in preparation for the panel highlights:

> “While there is increasingly widespread agreement that working with men and boys is a necessary part of achieving gender equality, there are also some continuing concerns regarding existing strategies and goals. There are still divergent understandings of the nature and extent of men’s and boys’ roles in regard to the gender equality agenda. While interrogating men’s roles as gatekeepers and framing their roles as partners reflect important dynamics and principles related to engaging men and boys, they do not fully capture their role or stake in gender equality. To achieve gender equality requires simultaneously engaging men to be actively committed to redistributing power in both their personal lives and in the larger societal sphere. In addition to broader ethical and social gains, men as individuals benefit from greater equality in the form of improved and healthier relationships with the women and girls in their lives, and more options in terms of their own experiences, behaviours and choices.”

Gary emphasized the growth of MenEngage from a small network to more than 600 members and its clear trajectory toward increasing dialogue with and accountability to the women’s rights organizations. He emphasized the growing evidence base of what works and the need to take such approaches into national governments and to scale. He ended by emphasizing the need for benchmarks: to take seriously the work of “engaging men” and not just let it be a topic of the month. He suggested that if our global goal is that men and boys perform 50 percent of the caregiving then we need to measure men’s time use; and if we have a goal of universal access to comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), then we need to count the percentage of children who have access to it.

He concluded by saying: "To the delegates here we urge you to not, I repeat to not, think that engaging men is a new way to empower women and to take resources from the existing and necessary infrastructure of women's empowerment. We need new funding to build on the work to engage men. But that funding cannot and should not be taken from existing programming. We need to add to and build on what exists for women - economic empowerment initiatives, health programming and the like - not invent new spaces."

You can see the video of the panel discussion [here](#) (unfortunately it’s only partially available). And keep an eye on the website for the chair’s summary of the panel discussion [here](#).
Panel 5 - Changing social norms to achieve gender equality: expectations and opportunities: MenEngage oral intervention* Monday March 16, 2015, 3-6 PM
MenEngage was one of two civil society representatives who made an oral intervention during this panel. You can read the full statement here. It was prepared with input from MenEngage Alliance members during the caucus meetings (see above) and presented by Joni van de Sand. The statement highlighted: 1) the need to transform patriarchal norm-setting and negative forms of masculinities for the benefit of women and girls, as well as men and boys; 2) the belief that the ‘personal is political,’ calling on men to step up and speak out in every aspect of their lives; 3) the need to transform institutions; and finally 4) the need to think beyond the man/women binary to include attention to issues of race, caste, class, age, sexual orientation and gender identity and expressions – including in the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

You can see the video here and read the chair’s summary of the event here.

MenEngage oral statement during General Discussion*
Wednesday 18 March 2015, 4-5 PM
The General Discussion is the part of CSW where each member state shares its own statement, with its own priorities. In addition, UN agencies and NGOs get speaking time.

MenEngage was one of the civil society speakers, and we got three minutes to present our oral statement. The MenEngage statement was based largely on the Delhi Call to Action, the outcome document of the Second MenEngage Global Symposium in November last year, combined with insights from this CSW. It was further developed at CSW with inputs from MenEngage members, and presented by Joni van de Sand.

The statement sets out some broad principles for transforming patriarchal norms and engaging men and boys for gender justice. It is a call to action toward governments and UN agencies. It is also a pledge that the MenEngage alliance will work on these issues internally and with our members.

You can read the text of the statement here, and see the video of the presentation here, starting at 32:40.