National Conclave on Working with Men & Boys for Gender Equality

Potentials and Possibilities of Working with Men and Boys

Date : December 04 – 05, 2015
Venue: United Schools Organisation of India (USOI House), Qutub Institutional Area, New Delhi

Context

In the last ten years or so there has been an increasing recognition that it is necessary to work with men and boys to address issues related to gender. Starting with issues like HIV/AIDS and violence against women there was an increasing identification that women’s vulnerabilities can be addressed by addressing men as well. The need to integrate work with men as a conceptual issue has been established in a greater range of development interventions including maternal health, child care and protection of children’s rights and use of contraceptives to name just a few areas. Similarly moving from violence against women, the need to understand men and ‘masculinities’ has also been emphasised as societies recover from violence and conflict.

The 2nd MenEngage Global Symposium organised in New Delhi in November 2014 brought together over 1200 practitioners, thinkers, activists, NGOs, international agencies and donor community from over 90 countries and they discussed a wide range of issues concerning men and masculinities.

India has a long history of men coming together to promote the agenda of women’s rights and their demand for gender equality and a life free of violence. Since 2007 the work with men has been getting consolidated in most of the regions in India. The Forum to Engage Men (FEM) is a national forum and space for individuals and organizations engaging with men and boys for gender equality.

About the Stakeholder Consultation

The Stakeholder Consultation was planned as an interface between different stakeholders working on issues related to development and gender justice. A range of organisations and individuals engaged in working on men and masculinities and gender justice came together for a
National Conclave on the 4th and 5th of December 2015 to examine the different areas on engaging men and boys and the approaches that seem to be yielding results.

A Stakeholder Consultation was planned as follow up to the National Conclave where the lessons around work with men and boys and the possibilities of such work were shared with a larger range of development stakeholders from UN Agencies, bilateral organisation and other development organisations who shared their views and experiences on the idea of engaging men and boys on interventions related to gender justice.

### HIGHLIGHTS OF DISCUSSIONS

- Analysis of different areas of engaging men and boys and approaches that seem to be working
- The work on gender equality assumes significance in current political environment when role of women being politically manipulated and Hindutva re-established
- Shift in attitude of women's groups: from hostility ten years ago, to trust now
- Change brought about by men's groups like MAVA taking a concrete stand on issues
- Sea change in strategies of social engagement: as collectivisation reduces and individualisation increases
- Attitudes easier to change than behaviours: but often donors want to see visible behaviour change
- Sustained engagement with men and boys over several years finally filters down to behaviour change
- Programmes clearly demonstrate the joy men and boys feel when they become 'free' from shackles of masculinity that prevent them forming equitable domestic relationships
- Impact of MASVAW's working visible after 10 years in Kashi Vidyapeeth where campus is largely free of harassment
- Important to translate change at the personal, family level too for self growth
- Significant psychological impact of messages of trust by gender-sensitised auto drivers, advancing the mobility of women in Delhi
- Working with men needs to be long-term engagement, a process oriented qualitative strategy rather than aiming to reach out to large numbers
- Projects alone will not change the situation: need to discover ways to continue engagement beyond projects
- To be sustainable, change must be encouraged to extend from the individual level to wider societal level
• Both strategies have been successful – encouraging change at the personal level and change at the collective level
• Individual personal changes and changes in domestic interpersonal relations set a big example to rest of society
• Examining if the work with men has had an impact outside the gender domain, for eg on issues of farmers suicides, caste, religion and livelihoods
• Sustainability beyond donors’ funding is cause for concern: long term processes are needed
• Social sector needs to leverage advantages of social media; campaigns and messages remain the same, only medium is different; the challenge is to link digital world with real world
• Difference is that earlier men were not involved in social programmes, now they are, and are also willing to discuss issues of masculinity unlike before
• Communities have now taken ownership of their own issues, instead of depending on social activists from outside to come in
• In the age of internet and digital media, a shift from building a community, which is now easier, to amplification and engagement
• Multidimensional strategies needed to impact social norms, media being one of them
• Empowerment had many components and skills and livelihood building of women must be accompanied with ability to negotiate other freedoms
• Addressing the families and communities around the target women was therefore essential
• Working with the community is important in working with an individual
• Experiences from their grassroots work are the backbone to forming policy, when organisations are active in both policymaking as well as field interventions
• Promoting the role of an individual as a changemaker in the social context was very important, as brought by impact of Bell Bajao campaign
• Mentoring must be taken very seriously for organisations to ensure second and third tier leaders are created
• Doubts within the movement: those who are not service providers but do advocacy for norm change have doubts if the ‘demands’ they have raised are being addressed by someone? Scale versus quality doubts – the numbers game is a pressure. Do short ‘gender sensitisation’ sessions really work?
• Bringing about institutional and structural changes is very challenging as state institutions are often very resistant
• Scale along with quality is essential and it can be achieved with hard work
- Mix of three crucial strategies recommended for any campaign – media, training and community mobilisation
- Expectations from the women's movement – that men will leave behind their masculinity in all spheres
- Need to find out how to introduce intersectionality in masculinity; link the men's movement to wider social movements of caste, land, economic rights, food rights, the environment movement, labour rights etc
- Ghettoisation of issues needs to end
- Religion should be entirely kept out of the gender rights discourse
- Need to address the masculinity being promoted in online space including Twitter and through WhatsApp groups
- Technology being viewed as the solution to all challenges
- Taking cue from the women's movement, great deal of effort needs to be put in by men's movement too in order to ensure the discourse keeps moving forward
- The talk about men and masculinities should now focus on the intersections with caste, class, disability and religion: appropriate strategies to be drawn up to strengthen the dialogues
- The neo liberal context and emergence of new forms of violence to be kept in mind now
- Over past two decades there has been deepening of the work with men: through collaborations with students in particular, other campaigns, political parties, rural interventions and by raising issues of nationalism and militarisation
- Need to build new solidarities
- Space for growth of consumerism is expanding even as very little space is available for promoting issues of equality
- Important to involve new stakeholders and go beyond gender binaries in our work
- Need a new language to talk to men
- All social causes are interlinked, we cannot say we are working only for one cause
- All departments work separately in government, it’s a challenge to work with them
- 'Instrumentalism' is the word for engaging with men
- No 'external' stakeholders, all are stakeholders, period
- Need for clear strategies of work with men that can integrate with other programmes like ongoing government health programmes
- More reading material needs to be developed through writings of activists and those in the field
- Regional conclaves should go into greater depth on issues
- The current social context gives urgency to the need to work on masculinity and gender
Some major challenges identified were: Intersectionality; Institutional structure; Depoliticizing of issues; Need for sustainability; How to work with government; Complexity of issues and how to deal with scale

**Introductory Round:** After general instructions by Satish K Singh, Additional Director, CHSJ, an introductory round was conducted by Anand Pawar, Executive Director, SAMYAK, Pune, Maharashtra, by asking participants to share their experiences in 2015. This was an icebreaker helping the group to bond together, as people passed the mike from one to the other.

Opening the event, Subhash Mendhapurkar, Director, SUTRA, Himachal Pradesh welcomed the fact that this conclave had brought together people from different sections in the social sector which was significant given the current political environment. He said the conclave was aimed at tackling challenges and expanding existing and potential partners, and seeing how one can meet challenges especially in an environment where the role of women was being politically manipulated and Hindutva being re-established.

He said there were two objectives – “How to expand our work and how to develop regional conclaves. That’s the calendar for 2016.”

**The Changing Tools of Social Engagement**

Moderating the first session, ‘Sharing of Experiences on Working with Men and Boys on Different Issues eg: GBV, SRHR, HIV, Adolescents, Governance etc’ Abhijit Das, Director,
Centre for Health and Social Justice (CHSJ), New Delhi, reflected on the nature of work with men and boys and why the work is necessary. He opened the session with an invitation to the panelists to talk about what challenges they face and what success they have tasted.

The pioneer of starting work with men in the 1990s, Harish Sadani, Chief Functionary, Men Against Violence and Abuse (MAVA), Mumbai, Maharashtra, described the journey they set out on 24 years ago. He said today he was mentor to 600 people. “In this journey of 24 years, what have been your experiences and results that have served as inspiration?” questioned Das.

Sadani said he faced many trials, hiccups and tribulations. "There was a lot of scepticism from women's groups earlier but now they are working together with us as collaborators. We remained in touch with the women's groups and kept them abreast of our work." He said though there were challenges in the early 90s, but the men who began working on masculinity had been working on issues of women's empowerment for a long time and that helped in smoothening the path eventually.

Referring to the changes that have taken place in methods of social engagement, he said now activist groups have their own solutions and it was interesting to see how their methodologies worked in this age of individualization and ICT. "Unlike old times when large crowds of 100-150 could be mobilised easily, now in a rally there may be hardly 15 to 20 people but there are many more people giving support and ideas online, and there is a lot of innovation in the way they function and come up with solutions. It is inspiring," he said.

Das agreed that people were changing and the tools of social engagement have also changed with individualization increasing and collectivization reducing.

Madhumita Das, Senior Programme Specialist, International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW), involved in implementing ICRW's gender related school interventions, described how its programmes are rigorously planned and shared their results.

She said, “Our evaluation showed there are no shortcuts to achieving results. Donors want change in one year, but that is not possible. Attitudes do change and there are small changes that are visible but sudden drastic changes will not be seen.” She said in its work with girls in Rajasthan ICRW found, “You can’t ignore boys while trying to involve girls in sports. So we bring everyone together. Our emphasis is on projects where men and boys are also involved.” Abhijit Das summed up that attitudes were easier to change than behaviour.

Abhijit Das raised this point with Shashikant Ahankari, Chief Functionary, Halo Medical Foundation (HMF), Maharashtra. Did he agree it was difficult to change behaviours and if so, what evidence did he have to support it?

Ahankari said that since the time they got the opportunity to work with men in 2010, they have been working mainly on the issue of violence perpetrated by men. He said they started with
questioning what should be done to change men's attitudes so that they treated their wives as friends. In the first year of their work it was very difficult to change mindsets. There were both married and unmarried men in the groups set up under the project. Group members viewed women as having secondary status. Over time the programme resulted in some successful instances where men did change. "We found it was necessary to work not only for stree mukti (freedom for women) but for purush mukti (freedom for men). Specifically, rearing of children is not done by men. To take children out and rear them is seen as women’s responsibility. HMF tried to introduce men to the concept of spending time with their children, it encouraged men to bathe their children, take them to school, and spend some time engaging with the family. Men and women helping each other and doing small things together were encouraged. Over time, men’s dialogue with their wives increased and it was seen that couples’ were enjoying more intimate moments."

He narrated the incident of a man who had sex with his wife but never spoke to her about it, but after he started talking with her about it he said he felt their intercourse was better as both of them felt happier with the increased dialogue. One man had a baby daughter and he distributed sweets in the village at her birth. Such small changes have come with the programme run by HMF and its partners, said Ahankari. Men found it very joyful to roam around in the village with their children openly, to take them to school and to other activities, to play with them; they also had a sense of mukti (freedom) in working in the kitchen, establishing a rapport with their wives and having greater communication with them including sexual relations that were consensual and therefore more fulfilling. The togetherness they experienced in their relationships and the sense of identity and self it helped the men to build all led to emotional and behavioural changes in them. Ahankari said it was a process of four years that led to filtering down of the changes.
Abhijit Das asked youth activist Manak Matiyan, Executive Director, The YP Foundation, what changes he saw in young men and women over the time period of the spectrum of his work, as the larger social environment was changing. Matiyan said, 'I have worked in many urban spaces in Delhi and have seen how young people across genders now relate to each other. There has been a spate of new social movements in urban areas. They have taught young women to say 'no' and that retaliating firmly against violence in relationships is legitimate, that it's okay to do so. Teaching about the joy of consensual relationships, there have been a lot of changes and in Delhi I've seen the emergence of campaigns like 'Happy to Bleed' and 'Pinjra Tod.'" He said he believed that men should now occupy a backseat when it comes to taking roles of social leadership, allowing other genders to come up and lead in several spheres.

Taking this thought forward, Abhijit Das questioned if men were now learning to leave space and said that it was an interesting process. He asked Dr Sanjay Singh, founder member, Men’s Action to Stop Violence Against Women (MASVAW), Uttar Pradesh, who is a professor at Kashi Vidyapeeth (KVP), Varanasi, about the changes that have taken place in the university after he started working there through MASVAW. Singh said over ten years MASVAW had worked with 300-400 postgraduate students, both boys and girls, from different backgrounds, trying to introduce them to social activism. Giving a background to the situation at the time in 2002 when he started working in KVP on issues of gender, Singh said KVP was a state university known for producing political leaders and also the students' union in the region in eastern UP was very crude and fearless in a hegemonic masculine way. It had traditionally been anti-women. Eve teasing by students, teachers and non teaching staff was common on the campus, said Singh. After he started working on gender rights issues, several women facing harassment came to him. He took many of these problems to the Vice Chancellor of the university and gradually the environment started to change. As students interacted with MASVAW workers and their involvement in the network grew, the situation started changing. Through regular film screenings, seminars and discussions the students' attitudes were influenced, and many students emerged as role models on gender issues.

Specifying some changes that have taken place, Singh said, "Some of the former students who are now married have implemented at a personal level what they understood through their work with MASVAW and have very equitable relations with their wives. This has inspired others also to change. It is important to change things even at the personal level and issues of social justice existing in families and households need to be tackled first." He said it was important for him to break the hierarchy and patriarchy that existed in families, and he had done this by analysing his own family instead of glorifying it, which helped him to question matters and resist injustice even though it resulted in him having to stay separately from his parents. Linking this to his own personality development, he said this also helped him become more passionate about the gender work that he does. About the university campus, he said though it’s not 100 percent women friendly but definitely teachers and staff cannot eve tease any more. The president of the
students' union is now a girl. These were some specific changes that took place in KVP due to MASVAW's work over the years.

Abhijit Das commented that change could also be rooted personally.

**Shuchi Goel, psychologist, Manas Foundation, New Delhi,** was asked about Manas' campaign in the city under which auto rickshaws on the streets carry the message, 'Ye auto mahilaon ka samman karta hai'

"Is this only a hoarding or is it actually an agent of change?" Abhijit Das enquired. Goel said the campaign started in 2013, after the 2012 rape case took place in Delhi and there was a widespread sense of fear. “*Mobility and public transport is very important in Delhi as many women work here. So it’s not just an auto hoarding, we have sensitization programs under which 85,000 auto drivers and 42,000 taxi drivers have been sensitized. We are also working with DTC bus marshals. It’s a mindset we are targetting. Faith in the city's safety is less and we have fear, we always wonder will people help us? So we are making sensitized people visible and this is a medium.*" The auto rickshaw was a personal space, she said, and the messages created a dialogue between the auto driver and the commuter which introduced trust and faith. As many people did not have personal vehicles, there was considerable scope for change with such messages. She clarified that Manas was a mental health organization and that cognitively the messages had a psychological impact. “We learn what we see. It’s a powerful impact. We chose this medium of transport to work upon because in Delhi connectivity is such an important issue; if we can secure our roads then we can ensure women are able to work outside their homes, they can be independent and there is hope,” said Goel.

**Shift in Attitude of Women's Groups and Others**

Abhijit Das questioned Sadani, who had earlier said that scepticism by the women about the work of men’s groups had changed over time. He asked what made this attitudinal change possible that created trust and participation in MAVA's work?

Sadani replied that the shift occurred because MAVA had proven that it could take a stand on issues of gender justice and not just talk about it – it had taken a stand both collectively and at the personal/individual levels.

MAVA undertook one to one counselling, collected money for victims of gender violence, supported jilted lovers etc. Right at its inception MAVA had to take a stand on contemporary issues of gender equality and not just talk about it, even though they were not equipped to do so at the time, said Sadani. The first case MAVA took up was of a 19-year old acid attack victim.

Describing the incident, Sadani said the five goons who had been sent to carry out the attack were supposed to attack Salma, a wife seeking divorce, but mistakenly attacked Deepti whom they took to be Salma. Deepti underwent 15-16 plastic surgery operations. When MAVA
reached the burns ward where she had been admitted, her mother told them the attack was meant for Salma, not her daughter. To which Deepti replied, ‘Salma ka kaya kasoor hat?’ The incident was a turning point in MAVA's work. Prisoners from Nashik central jail sent letters to Deepti saying though they had committed severe crimes they could not think of doing something so heinous. Bhanwari Devi, when she visited Mumbai, also said, "I can’t think of any other men’s support group like yours." Thus MAVA was born and it showed it was important to take a stand. Sadani said they also started a unique magazine by men for men that encouraged and showcased changes by them at the personal level. In the past ten years the first batch of MAVA's mentors has got married, had children and is talking to everyone about these issues. He opined that both the things worked – encouraging change at the collective and individual level.

Sadani cautioned, “This work should be process-oriented. Five to seven years we remain persistent and then it becomes successful. To jump and try to reach huge figures isn’t the way to go. Just bombardment of messages is not enough, we must work with men qualitatively.”

Bringing About Change

Abhijit Das next asked Madhumita Das what were the lessons learnt from matured projects at ICRW and what they had done with these lessons? Also, did she agree with Sadani that a more engaged, long-term process was required to bring change?

Das opined that sometimes it was felt that maybe ten programmes or sessions with the target community would bring about behaviour change. For instance, in the Parivartan programme the concept was to bring change with the help of sports. "Then we found we had to discover a way of continuing to engage the youth as we moved on beyond our programme. Also, that change must be encouraged not just at the individual level but also at the larger societal level. Thus, as we move on, the young boys who were with us in the first phase have become community mobilisers now," she said.

It had been very effective to see what happened to these people later and go back to the communities, said Madhumita Das. She said it was in programmes at the school level that they saw the attitude that sustained itself. Boys who had supported the initiatives actually felt more secure to sustain the changed behaviour even after the programme was over, rather than in families where fathers didn’t follow such changes anymore.

Abhijit Das said it was clear that, "Projects alone will not change the situation. Not everyone has a permanent institution like Dr Sanjay Singh has at Kashi Vidyapeeth. There is a need to find a way to keep relationships going beyond projects." He asked Ahankari if he had any examples where attitudes had changed and seeped out from family to other spaces. "Due to changes in interpersonal relationships are there other larger changes that have occurred?" he enquired

Ahankari explained how in small groups in villages, if there was an example in one family it made a big difference in society. Supporting this by narrating an incident, he said, “In a project
village the animation and his father were working in the fields. One day when the father came home unexpectedly, he saw a man leaving from the back door as he entered. He abused his daughter-in-law and picked up a stick to beat her. The animator was called. His wife hugged him. The animator stood up against his father in front of others in the village and said, 'Who are you to abuse my wife and ask her who entered here?' The boy who had come was actually there to use a mobile phone charger as their house had electricity. This example, where the animator took his wife's side, stood out in the community. Thus changes in interpersonal relations lead to other changes too.’

Abhijit Das enquired if HMF’s work with men and boys had brought about changes outside the gender domain too, for instance, had it had any impact on the farmers’ suicides that are rampant in Maharashtra, or on issues of caste, religion or livelihood? Ahankari responded that while it was difficult to make a direct correlation, no cases of farmers’ suicides had occurred in the villages where they worked. Also, ”The leadership role taken by the men and boys who are members of our groups has led to their participating in village Dispute Resolution Committees and in other matters in the area related to land and property, for instance. While joint ownership of property between couples has become quite an established norm in the area, the group members have played a role in ensuring that the environment in the villages is inclusive and moderate and minority communities like Muslims are accepted,” said Ahankari.

Abhijit Das then questioned Matiyani and Dr Sanjay Singh, who work with young men, if they addressed heterosexual men only? How did their work play out in relations of men with men?

Singh said through academic seminars for instance they engaged gay people and transgender and female sex workers in discussions, supported them in admissions and gave them space to interact with other students. Gender based violence that existed in the LGBTQ community was also a subject of discussion.

Matiyani stated that he wanted a feminist consciousness for men as well. “It means a lot of things to be a man. You can be bullied as a man too. It is important to know that. We are hence seeing changes as such conversations are coming up in different spaces. The intersection of class, caste and sexuality are also automatically linked, we must understand this.”

**Possibility of Deep Impact along with Huge Scale**

Abhijit Das questioned Matiyani and Goel, who he pointed out, had scale on their side, if their model of gender sensitization was leading to the kind of results they desired and also what were its limitations?

Goel elaborated that it was not only about numbers and that in their gender sensitization programmes the changes did not occur in just that one hour of interaction. Manas went back to the drivers to check their progress. She shared that even when funding for the project had been completed, they continued with the work. There is also an 'auto sahara' helpline and the auto
rickshaw drivers came back through the helpline with questions. After every one year the drivers returned to them for booster trainings.

Abhijit Das inquired if they had any dropouts, to which Goel replied that it was mandatory for the drivers to undergo the gender training when they came to renew their vehicles' license. Manas also undertook home visits. She explained, “We have formal monitoring and evaluation. We have a questionnaire and we also got statistical analysis done. There was 81% behavioural change in the drivers according to that evaluation. For example an auto driver said if he lives in south Delhi and is approached by a woman commuter who has to go to the west and it's night time, he still takes her. We get calls from the drivers and one driver has even starting taking feedback from his commuters.”

**Creative Methods of Project Sustainability**

Abhijit Das pondered over the long term engaged processes of projects. He said there were projects with 50 percent donor ownership and there existed uncertainties of funding and time. He questioned how the long term nature of these projects was being negotiated in order to ensure sustainability.

Ahankari stated that it was clear a process should be sustained for at least 3-4 years. Building motivation among the community and group members was required. The social status of workers went up in the villages and their involvement in social life increased as they worked on projects. These expansions in their perspective and world view gets people addicted to working on social issues; community members also become motivated to stand for various elections. This growing interest in social work brings group members to a stage where they are willing to continue the work in some way even if the project ends. “A process of internal sustainability, therefore, can save projects,” noted Abhijit Das.

Madhumita Das added that ICRW had been institutionalizing these processes, for instance in the schools where it worked. "We try to work through local organisations which have other ongoing projects too with which our projects are interlinked for sustainability. These are some ways of developing ownership of the issue in the community, which by then knows what to do next and avenues are created," she said.

Dr Sanjay Singh said it was ultimately a voluntary activity. There were sustainability avenues in KVP where they had developed a continuous process of capacity building of teachers and forums had been created for discussions and bringing about attitudinal change. He said, "We organise seminars and people come and join. Students also increase their marketability and livelihoods by joining with us.”

Abhijit Das concluded the session by adding that in these difficult times it was necessary to create a new discourse and make smart new projects.
Changes, Challenges and Pathways

The second session on 'Sharing of Experiences: What Approaches Seem to Work eg – community mobilization and capacity building, networking and campaigning, role modeling and mentoring, mass media and social media, alliance building and partnership with women’s groups etc' was moderated by Poonam Kathuria, Founder and Director, Society for Women's Action and Training Initiative (SWATI), Ahmedabad, Gujarat.

Requesting a critical look at the work being done by the session's panelists, Kathuria began with questioning Milind Chavan of Masum about the difference in the approach to its work with men now from when it had started out.

Chavan explained that Masum, which works with backward communities in rural areas of Maharashtra on issues of health and violence and is associated with programmes for mitigating communal violence, used to dialogue with men about why they were not intervening in programmes. Today however they were working with men. Masculinity and patriarchy talks are changing, the patriarchal mindset now thinks women are very empowered, but on the whole the talk was more positive today, he opined. "Earlier men felt threatened by women's empowerment. Now they are willing to discuss issues of masculinity and examine it.” He also said the difference between the work earlier and now was that earlier paid workers from outside would come in and work for the community, whereas now the community is working for itself and has taken ownership of its own issues.

Crossing Boundaries with Internet

Kathuria then asked Sonali Khan, Breakthrough, “The impact of social media appears to be temporary. Every day I am signing campaigns on change.org. So much of your work is with the media, so what is it's impact and is it really temporary?"
With digital and social media there was two way communication, which was important. One could amplify. The audience can also share material and give feedback. She said, “It reaches scale beyond geography.” It was easier to build communities today. The shift was from community building to amplification and engagement. The important thing was to connect the digital and real world, she felt. “We mobilize digitally and in the real world. They spill over, it’s interconnected. These boundaries are not applicable anymore. It is a continuum. The ways to engage are the same and today the digital medium has cut the costs.”

Khan said the social sector should make use of the digital and social media for these four opportunities that it afforded:

- Engaging people and having a two-way conversation (as opposed to television, for eg)
- Amplifying and going to scale, beyond geography. Google hangouts, webinars etc help in widening conversations
- User-generated medium, in which audience can upload visuals, text etc
- The digital medium helps in cutting costs

"The challenges in using this medium is that its fast-moving and transient; however, according to me the only real challenge here is how to connect the digital world to the real world," said Khan. "For Breakthrough, a campaign is a continuum online and offline; the messages are the same, there is no difference in the campaign itself." She ended by saying it was up to the sector to leverage the opportunity of digital media as efficiently as possible.

**Empowering through Livelihood**

Kathuria next asked Shrinivas Rao, Azad Foundation, if it was only a skill building organization or reaching beyond that?

Describing Azad's Sakha cabs programme where taxis are operated by women drivers trained by the organisation, Rao opined that empowerment should be connected to livelihood. There was not much income in small Self Help Group (SHG) programmes and traditional income generation methods promoted for women like papad-making, he felt. Azad wanted to feminize the masculine spaces related to livelihood and so it started a programme for livelihoods with dignity. Women on wheels were seen as agents of change and revolutionary. "The components of women's empowerment include many things. To be assertive, self development and skills are needed. Hence Azad provides skill and livelihood as one component but it’s a part of their empowerment,” said Rao

He said Azad realised the women drivers would not be successful despite their skill development, they needed to be empowered too. He described how the women they have trained can negotiate better now at home – "They can say they will work for 4 hours to 12 hours outside and hence won't be able to work at home. These women have set norms; they take economic
decisions, marriage decisions, and decisions about the education of their children. They can assert themselves."

Connecting Grassroots to Policy Making

Kathuria asked Snehal from Akshara, Mumbai, an organisation that works on issues of gender and violence with students and others in the city and is running the successful 103 helpline, how the work was undertaken at the policy level and how its grassroots work impacted its policymaking.

Snehal said all Akshara's policymaking work had its backbone in the grassroots work. The information gathered and the community experiences link on a macro level. The need of the hour is what forced policy to change. Data-gathering and analysis help. “In the 12-13 years we worked in colleges, we talked about women's empowerment, focusing on harassment in public spaces. The Safe City programme is one such example that was conceptualized to tackle the issue that emerged during out work in the colleges. Working with boys is important. We conduct concept-building workshops and make films and videos too. We conducted interviews in BEST buses in Mumbai, in which 95 percent of the 4000 women interviewed said they experienced sexual harassment. We approached several organizations with this data and they joined us. We have given exposure and visibility to them as well, we don't just use people for data gathering. That is why it's important to engage at the grassroots level,” said Snehal.

Challenging Community and Individual Mindsets

Kathuria then questioned the panel about two aspects – the changes brought about by the fact that a lot of the work in the social sector seemed to have shifted to individual-based work, and the kind of mentoring that was needed for NGOs to sustain and build leaders in the community.

Chavan felt that the knowledge and understanding that had been built in communities would stay and it did not matter if the people they were training were educated or not. Violence was an issue for everyone. Support groups tried to solve such issues. They intervened and worked. “There is a sense of ownership that has developed in the last 28 years,” he added.

Khan said the role of an individual in the social context was very important. Issues like domestic violence, sex selection and sexual harassment were complex and interconnected. There could be no uni-dimensional strategy to address them. Breakthrough was clear that it was trying to impact social norms by strategizing through the media. Ultimately the journey of social change had to be taken by an individual. The number of people reached was not so important. Breakthrough's successful campaigns were those in which it said something positive and actionable could be done to tackle a social norm. For instance, its Bell Bajao campaign succeeded in creating a conversation around the issue of domestic violence and also made change possible by placing an effective tool in the hands of an individual. "How does an individual connect to the big story – that needs to be brought out," said Khan.
On the issue of mentoring, she said central to Breakthrough's work was how to build democratic internal functioning and leadership and the ability to take risks. “We talk with the staff about celebrating failure and learning lessons from it.” She added that mentoring must be taken very seriously and it was important to create second and third tier leaders in every organisation.

Rao said, “Kyun darein zindagi main kya hoga, kuch na hoga toh tajurba hoga.” People's passions needed to be nurtured and they needed to be decisive about what they were doing. He added, this had been the ethos of their organisation, which focussed on an individual. He stated that a woman, who decides to become a driver, influences others and it then became a collective movement. “We have the strength of a collective and the individual also has things to take back to the family. So, an individual goes out into a community where they won’t be accepted so easily. Without working with the community, therefore, the individual cannot work. In our trainings, we invite parents. There are family faculty meets because we understand that the family's stake is also important,” he added.

Talking about the importance of social media, Snehal said, "Young people associate with issues on social media and not just with groups on social media. They associate in an individual manner in the digital world. Moreover, the tempo of issues online is maintained very briefly, only for a few hours, and then it drops." However, she pointed out that the digital world catered to only one class, with those from poorer socio-economic environments being left out. She also felt young people were more interested in jobs and issues of livelihood rather than issues of gender and social change.

**Balancing Scale - Quality and Dealing with Raising Demand:**

Kathuria enquired, "What are the doubts we have regarding our own work?” What was the expertise involved in changing society and was it easier to raise one’s voice on some issues? She also raised questions on the inclination of the state.

Khan responded that as Breakthrough did not do 'service delivery' but instead engaged people through advocacy and awareness to 'create demand' for changing social norms - for instance break down the walls created around domestic violence through the Bell Bajao campaign – it faced doubts sometimes as to what this change would lead to? Were there systems in place to take care of the 'demands' among people that an organisation like Breakthrough was creating? She added, "We don’t offer services, we don’t have a shelter or helpline. We at best create demand. Raising demand means they also have to be redressed and there we have a drawback."

"The doubt for us is - how do we in our work and mandate ensure the intersectionality of issues?" she enquired. "How do we link structures and systems like those of land rights and inheritance laws, for instance, with tackling patriarchy?"

Talking about Azad, Rao said the organisation had been grappling between issues of scale versus quality. It had been able to make only 250 women work out of the 500 that had been trained by it
for five years. He said, “We need to make donors and others realize this journey is qualitative and not based on scale. However, it’s a pressure on us, money is being spent and the results have to justify it. There is a numbers game. Scale and quality is always a problem. Another challenging issue is, as the women assert themselves there is a backlash. These are stories of aggressive behaviours. We see that these women are becoming masculine rather than bringing femininity to the space. We are bothered by this as well.”

Snehal said Akshara conducted BEST driver training programmes and trained 1000 drivers. But there were many challenges and they question if the two hour training is really working. They don’t call it gender sensitization; it’s only a training to prevent sexual harassment.

**Challenging the Masculine and Feminine Space**

Kathuria asked Khan if there was any empirical evidence on the impact of digital campaigns on the ground at the grassroots level. And from all the panelists she enquired if institutional change could be linked to individual change.

Rao said their programmes were at first for women only till they saw these were not working so well. Just changing the women's behaviours was not enough. They realized it was important to engage with men in the community and with the women's families also. Thus Azad started working with men. They called men and had sessions with them twice a month. In 2012 after the Delhi rape case, issues of violence were also raised in these groups. Azad thus developed an agenda of working with men in the community and with families. It had also identified 50 men who were role models in the communities and it worked with them.

Narrating Azad's experience of working with the Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) to describe how difficult it was to bring about institutional change, he said “There were no norms for women in the DTC. It was laid down that the driver can only be one who is at least 5’7 inches tall while all the women we worked with were shorter than that. The doctor said 5’3” can be applicable. However as the DTC seats are fixed, short people can’t drive them. We wanted a lever to be put in to adjust the seat and make it higher, but they declined and so our proposal to have women bus drivers in the DTC fell through. They would have become role models.”

**Are multiple strategies the Answer?**

Khan shared how no one gave money at one time for the digital campaigns and media mobilisation that they wanted to do but the situation has changed now. “Empirical evidence is possible today, the ICRW has been our partner in creating it. We didn’t always have money however for empirical research. There was very little money for doing a proper baseline and endline of the Bell Bajao campaign. But today the narrative has changed.

Our ongoing studies on empirical evidence show that no single strategy works. These are complex social problems we are dealing with. In Bihar we have a programme where we have
seen a combination of strategies working, no single strategy can bring about change. It has to be a mixture of three primary elements – a crucial media component; training component; and community mobilisation. So, multiple strategies are required."

She added, “For me it’s not a question of scale verses quality, it’s a binary that can’t exist after a point. We cannot have the option of saying we are working at depth so we cannot achieve scale. We can’t live in the cocoon that we do depth only and we can’t do scale, we must try and scale. Breakthrough goes through many battles to achieve this balance. For instance we do trainings with 18,000 children in Haryana, and we don’t compromise with quality - each child has to be reached twice a month. You can’t immediately see transformations, yet we need to bring in trainers, we need time, and we need evidence. It’s a lot more work than imagined.”

Snehal agreed with Rao that bringing about structural change was very challenging because it meant engaging with systems like the government which can be obdurate as the DTC experience has shown.

Group Discussions & Recommendations

Participants at the conclave were divided into five groups, each of which came out with recommendations and observations on the issue allotted to them.

- Group 1 discussed ‘Addressing issues related to gendered social norm change eg. early marriage, declining sex ratio, gender based violence and discrimination etc.’

The following points emerged:
In child marriage, commodification of women, practices of dowry and notions of purity one aspect is common: there are certain norms of masculinity which lead to this. There are economic issues that force women into early marriage. A related issue in child marriages is that they are unregistered. Girls are not the only victims, young boys are also affected. Mobility is also seen as a reason for girls to stop going to school. In a village when 15 buses were arranged for girls to go to school it was seen that this reduced early marriages. Action research and understanding the target communities also helped in tackling the problems.

Those with trans-identities have no effective method to tackle their issues and problems.

Regarding how effective was legislation, there was a sense among the group that legislation wasn’t enough to bring reform. For example: harassment is still rampant despite laws. There are instances when laws can be used to persecute women, for example sex selective abortions are banned and at times women are not allowed to abort even though they require it.

- Group number 2 discussed “Supporting women’s empowerment – eg. Economic empowerment, political empowerment, land and property rights etc.”

The following points emerged:

Women’s movements have often evolved as SHG groups which have become very commercialized- obtaining and paying off loans.

Hostility towards men has been counterproductive as violence against women has been found to increase when only women have been addressed without an enabling environment created through approaching men too. Men’s involvement is important.

For example, in UP there are youth groups in which masculinity training programmes take place. There was communication between women’s and men’s groups and Dalit groups also were added. 150 peer leaders were trained. 100 leaders came out and took it forward. The impact was such that it seeped into their own families. There were spaces for women in panchayats.

Another example is of Assam where an intervention addressed land rights issues. Men there get a farmer card and they were told that if they share the land with women they will get two cards. So they got ready to divide it.

It was also mentioned that in engaging men, trainers don’t generally begin with masculinity. They begin with issues of social hierarchy.

- Group 3 discussed ‘What approaches are effective and their potentials and limitations – lessons learnt.’

The following points emerged:
Violence in families needs to be examined; people need to reflect on their personal experiences, pressures and privileges etc. Can men give up their privileges? Informal peer to peer dialogue and sharing can also help in learning. Capacity building and follow ups are helpful. Building role models is another way of transforming attitudes and helps in mentoring. Collective action is very effective. Alliance building of people, NGOs and media is helpful. Campaigning helps in breaking myths. Negotiating with a gate keeper also helps. Simplifying laws also helps.

There is a possibility to develop diverse strategies. The challenges are intersectionality and diversity. Political correctness somewhere keeps us in a vulnerable state and could also gives people double faces.

- Group 4 discussed how institutions engage different institutions through ‘Addressing the private and public –potential for addressing different institutions and structures.’

The following points emerged:

There are various possibilities that can be explored around educational institutions, the Panchayati Raj and youth related issues. It was felt policies, marriage, education, media and political and economic institutions need to be looked at. It was felt that there is a need to think differently and be sensitive about these issues in urban spaces. The youth for instance is now challenging the institution of marriage – so how can one engage with them on this now.

There is a need to talk about rigid systems, and how to bring about change which is not easy. Caste and religious orientation affects people. Saffronization of education is also leading to gender based segregation. In Kerala it has been suggested that girls and boys be kept apart in classroom with a curtain between them. This ideology was not there in the 1980s and 1990s. There are fewer people talking about gender equality now. The face of the media is changing for the worse, with programmes such as Marathi soap operas for instance coming out against abortion.

Capacity building of teacher is recommended. There is need to find new material and new media to reach out to students and teachers. New media and messages that are relevant are needed.

Working with political parties is also important. There is a need to research and find linkages between corporative, economic decisions, masculinity and farmer suicides.

- Group 5 discussed ‘Is there a role for men in addressing men’s issues. – e.g. Men’s health, interpersonal and community level violence and conflict, suicide prevention etc’

The following points emerged:

Yes, there is a needed space for men to work with men on men's issues (in the way women address women). It was felt that issues of men's health that are generally raised in discourses are very narrow, dealing only with sexual and reproductive health. A wider view is needed. There is
a possibility for men to be engaged in talks about body literacy, removing misconceptions and HIV awareness. At all help lines, mostly men call. Roadside doctors are spilling over and they earn up to Rs 5,000 per day from adolescent men wanting to know about problems like sexual 'weakness'.

Regarding the issue of farmers' suicides, it was suggested men should be engaged to build closer bonds with their families.

Getting resources to work with men is a challenge, particularly to work on issues of men's health and well being, as health-related funds are already scarce. It would be a challenge therefore to translate such ideas of engaging men into projects with a budget, as donors would look upon it as another additional expense in health budgets.

The issue of men's violence against men is not gaining enough attention and space. It is important to define the impact of violence on people. The conflict in domestic spaces and men killing men in conflicts is important to discuss. There is silence in this area and there is need to widen the discourse. The UN security resolution talks about women and war and security, but is disassociated with men. Men’s violence on men hasn’t received its due attention. There is also a need to include transgender men in discussions and the violence they go through and there is also a need to focus on their health.

Expectations and Skepticism Related to Men
On the second day of the conclave, Prof Sanjay Srivastava, Jawaharlal Nehru University, moderated the first session ‘Working with Men: Experiences and Expectations of Women’s and other Social Movements’

Prof. Srivastava started by asking Madhu Bala, Senior Manager, Jagori, about what expectations they had from the men in the women’s movement.

Madhu Bala said, "It is not only in cases of violence that men need to leave their masculinity, but as a citizen, at home, with partners, in their behaviour in public places, in their attitudes and gaze. A talk between men to men talk is different from other conversations and it is in such spaces that issues of masculinity that need to be addressed emerge."

In the colonies of Madanpur Khadar and Badarpur in Delhi, Jagori was working with youth and there had been change. But the process of socialization will not change with a three year long project, said Madhu. She said they realized that only training women was not going to help. There has to be an engagement with men too in order to check hegemony and so Jagori adopted the methodology of involving men. Jagori was involved with MenEngage and in one of its projects it was training DTC bus drivers. She added that the bus drivers did not like lectures from younger women, so there were men to talk to the men. However, she opined this was a pattern that needed to be broken.

**Struggles to Join Hands**

Nasim Ansari, MASVAW, Uttar Pradesh, said they observed internal changes after they started working with MASVAW. "We worked with each other’s families as well and saw what changes came in them. These changes now need to be reviewed." Saying that MASVAW was working in 22 districts in UP, he said the district MASVAW forums discussed cases of violence that came up and action was taken collectively. Women were added to the groups to see if there was real change.

Ansari added that as a Muslim he tried to introduce changes in his community too but it resulted in fatwas being issued against them. A national level Maulana recently said women and men can never be equal. So to maintain this secondary status of women, they are not given property rights even though there was no law in religious texts that said women cannot be given property. He said MASVAW had not been able to make much progress in these communities and it was looking for people who could do so.

Anchita Ghatak, Secretary, Parichiti, West Bengal, working for the rights of domestic workers, said the women’s movement had challenged the work division in households. When workers talked of domestic violence then they were given support, but issues like work conditions and education of the children of workers were rarely given importance. Women who commuted from suburbs to the city faced a lot of harassment. As they explored these issues a lot of questions kept coming up.
“Can men make a difference? Initially, we thought they can’t. But then we found women say there is no point talking to them alone, talk to the men too. We have to start a dialogue with men and we think issues of mobility of the women and girl domestic workers' is a good place to begin. There are academicians who think we need to confront these issues. We had discussions in August and we hope to take this forward,” said Ghatak.

She also said the queer and trans movement was breaking binaries. There were solidarity attempts from trans groups. In the campaign 'Take Back the Night', the queer groups played a major part. So they were keen to break binaries. However there was some hostility from women that was hindering this process, she opined.

**Santosh Giri, Secretary, Kolkata Rista, West Bengal**, a group that started out by working for transgender rights but now works on issues of gender, differed with some of the other panelists, saying, “We have worked with men for 5-6 years. Masculinity is not only applicable on men. Dominance can be anyone’s nature.”

Giri added, there was a poster on sustainable goals at this venue that talked about men and women being equal, and it did talk about trans people. Santosh questioned the impact of this, adding, “I feel good that men talk about women, but there are very few men who speak about transgenders. Why don’t people talk about trans people? There is a need for change. Women's institutions are supporting us but they don’t come out in our support in public platforms. Why keep trans issues out? If you write 'gender' why do you exclude trans? It is important for everyone to unite and there is no point working alone. If you support us we will support you.”

**Finding Intersectionality in Masculinity**

Prof Srivastava said that masculinity was also the relation between men and men. The history of feminism was different. Intersectionality was an important part of it. But how will masculinity that had emerged from feminism find its own history? How to introduce intersectionality in masculinity? Vandana Mahajan said it was important to reflect how the men's movement linked to wider social movements. For example how to involve economic and ecological movements and work with men and what were the expectations at the wider spectrum. She said, "We need clarity if in our work we are only looking at changing men or are we looking at integration and linkages with issues like the agrarian crisis, farmers' suicides, the environment crisis etc." The agrarian crisis and the pressures that men faced were important issues that needed to be talked about.

Ghatak said there were many caste-based discriminatory practices in Bengal and it was important to enter the whole dialogue around caste. Then also, there are issues like Muslim women not being employed in Hindu households. Anand Pawar said unless the men's movement became a close part of the andolans/campaigns of other rights groups it would not be able to enter into their problems and integrate with them. Mendhapurkar said, "Ghettoization of issues needs to
stop. In the 1970s when men talked about women and there was a backlash to it, so we understood the need to create a dialogue. In the same way there is urgent need now to sit down and work diligently with those working on issues of environment, the farmer and agrarian crisis, and do our homework for the next few years."

Prof Srivastava said it was important to get out of the project mode of working. Madhu Bala agreed that gender norms cannot be changed by undertaking a project of a few years. Ansari responded that MASVAW UP never saw its work as related to any project rather, it was a constituent of its work in all activities and this is what has resulted in creating changemakers and role models. Giri too said, “We have learnt that projects will come and go, but we as activists have to stay. With an institution some money comes and we can do a few campaigns. This time during Durga Puja we did an awareness campaign and then a person approached us within a week. We need to see how to take projects forward without money as well.”

Ansari said religion was being misused by the maulanas to promote discrimination and hegemonic masculinity. Prof Srivastava added that in the 300 versions of the Ramayana there was no version that promoted gender equality so it was dangerous to justify ones views through religion. Speaking further on religion, he said it was not necessary to say it’s wrong because it’s wrong in my religion, then we would also have to say it’s right because my religion says so. No matter what religion says, if it’s wrong it’s wrong. He suggested religion should be kept out of the gender discourse.

Madhu Bala pointed out women were not allowed in mosques; women when they menstruate were not allowed inside temples. All religious leaders were men. "Age old practices of masculinity don’t change with small projects. So how do you check masculinity? There is a need to change daily behaviours," she said. Opinions were expressed that religion made women goddesses or slaves but not friends.

Prof Srivastava expressed concern over how in feminism there was a shorter spectrum of change and how would masculinity make its way to a similar change? He also opined that in the academic world issues of masculinity are being rasied and they seem to have connected but what about in other fields?

**Critical Look at Different Forms of Media**

The next session was on ‘Popular Media, Gender and Masculinities: Experience from Hindi, Marathi and Malyali Language Media,’ moderated by Sonali Khan.

Khan said, “The previous panel dealt with a critical issue, intersectionality. Much of the violence is embedded in structures in a systemic manner. The media has a role in both creating systemic violence and also undermining it. We want to see now how does media look back at the discourse of gender equity? How do we use and abuse media? In wanting to change systemic violence, how do we tackle the social media?”
Analysing the medium of films in Kerala, which have a huge impact on popular culture, Santosh KC, Media Action with Youth and Adolescents (MAYA), Kerala, said that in Malayalam movies one can find split personalities. Most times, the hero has to emerge as a 'man' in society. In one case in a movie a boy showed transgender behaviour but he had to become a man at the end of the day. Various tools are applied to make him a man. The popular actor Mammootty has always been depicted as a man with the help of his caste, class and institutions. In Kerala, the ultimate attainment one can have is to be defined as a man. The trajectory of certain stars is such - they start with small roles and act to be a star. Superhuman roles define masculinity in these films. There is a certain construction of manhood. When it comes to women in their lives, they are always seen as characters they can go back to and have children with. The woman is always waiting. The man may lust for someone else but comes back to the wife and this split personality works not only on reel men but on real men too, opined Santhosh.

Political Economy of New Media

Anand Pawar, SAMYAK, Pune, Maharashtra, felt that media was an umbrella term and masculinities and the media were related to wider forms of media. The media used masculinity to create messages about many things like caste, class etc. A simple discourse on masculinity was not enough. For instance, no one says they believe in the caste system, there was an illusion around all of us regarding it, yet we do follow caste. The media itself was an intervention and not just a tool of intervention. He said there was need to have a feminist analysis of the content NGOs' produce as well. NGOs' review others but there was a need to also review its internal mediums. The media, he said, was not a standalone institution. He clarified that the image of the six pack man was not only created by the media but by a larger economy, and the media was a part of a larger private profit. “Media is in hands that need to keep the masculine and feminine images separate. We need to analyze macro structures to get the bigger picture,” he urged.

Nasiruddin Haider, an independent journalist and activist, said he was from the print media and began his presentation with some misogynistic jokes. There was some laughter from the audience.

Haider then asked, “What is this and why are we laughing? Whatsapp is a part of our life. I accumulated sexist jokes and analyzed them. Every month 90 crore people use Whatsapp. After FaceBook it’s the most used platform. It’s modern and can be used in smart phones. You hope the people using these phones will be modern and believe in equality. But Whatsapp jokes say that married women rule over husbands, decide money matters, they gossip, they have a sharp tongue, they are dumb, they are confused, they aren’t confident. Also jokes about how women should be ideal are in abundance. Women are shown as jealous and objects of desire. Also, modern women are seen as home breakers.”

He added that men in these jokes were seen as victims. Marriage meant slavery to them. Men were seen as smart but abused. The Whatsapp users wee hence patriarchal. He urged, “We need
to question who is making these jokes? What is the political economy of this media? And is it a tactic to increase users?”

Khan questioned the particular kind of humour people enjoy. Moving away from popular culture and stereotyping was a great thing but much of the digital space was still masculine. Twitter was masculine too.

Haider said language was not only used but it but it stayed with us. He urged us to examine the images being created about women and the language used. ' Honour killings' was one such term. There was a need to create an alternative language, he said.

Pawar added that we needed to have some pressure and advocacy. Santhosh said there was rise of a certain kind of new films that are looking at masculinity critically. At the peak period of their career, women actors moved out to get married. But there were role models who broke the mould and came back to work. Haider suggested there must be active interventions by people themselves, for instance people should be encouraged to write to newspapers, demand press laws saying one can’t have sexist language and can use the law to intervene.

**Dialogue with Audience**

Participants agreed that misogynistic public/social groups were all over and one is often a part of them. No one thinks about things like these messages that keep impacting our consciousness till a big violent incident happens in ones own personal space and family.

Need was expressed to undertake gender sensitization programmes with the media; and also to come out with a concise booklet of media laws. There was also a need to closely examine what narratives media allowed and disallowed; the bans and conversations. Media was a strong tool to bring people together and also to keep them away.

There was lack of awareness about cyber law. Market economy needed to be challenged.

**Future Plans and Current Challenges**

The challenges that were listed in the next session, ‘Identifying Key Contemporary Challenges and How They Can Be Addressed?’were:

Intersectionality; Institutional structure; Depoliticizing of issues; Need for sustainability; How to work with government; Complexity of issues and how to deal with scale. Market dominance, how to denounce commodification, to be in touch with the aspirations of the people also came up as challenges.

Mendhapurkar stressed, “We need four more conclaves, not only with existing but with potential partners. Our focus now is how to connect with regional perspectives. From regions in the north,
west, south and east people need to take responsibility. We need to do this by 30th September, 2016. We need to build a forum."

A task force was then built with the following partners from five regions:

**Southern Region**: Santosh KC, Harita, Vandana Mahajan and Bimla Chandrasekhar

**Northern Region**: Dr Sanjay Singh, Rajdev, Ajay Trivedi

**Eastern Region** – Hussain Imam Fatmi, Bhawani Prasad Nayak, Santosh Kumar Giri and Anchita Ghatak

**Western Region** - Poonam Kathuria

**North East Region** – Santosh Kumar Giri, Ashish Dey

Prof Srivastava expressed concern that though workshops and conclaves were regularly held very little literature had been developed, for instance, there was need to have books/booklets so that there is reading material on issues of masculinities, of which there is currently a dearth. He felt though there was academic material on the subject, there was however a lack of material on work being carried out at the regional level and on the work by activists.

Abhijit Das exhorted participants to reflect and write extensively about their work, saying nobody else would be able to do so.

**Stakeholder Consultation**

*Venue: Development Alternative Conference Hall, 2.30 – 5.00 pm.*

The session started with the release of a book brought out by CHSJ, ‘Windows to Working with Men and Boys - A Compendium of Interventions and Research from the 2nd MenEngage Global Symposium.’ The volume was released by Dr Shashikant Ahankari, Vandana Mahajan and Santosh Giri.
Rimjhim Jain, CHSJ, shared that the volume has been brought out from CHSJ's Resource Centre on Masculinities and Gender Justice. The 74 case studies of on-the-ground interventions with men and boys in this volume went through a rigorous process of selection before they were chosen for presenting at the symposium. The material and experiences in the volume give insights and direction to others working in the field. It includes for instance experiences from Kenya, Vietnam, Norway, Estonia and other places. Practically every significant research or activity with men and boys has been included and there is a wider applicability beyond the local context of the interventions.

Abhijit Das added, “We have tried to make the book user friendly. We have mentioned if it is research or intervention, what issues it covers, if it's global or regional and the findings are all mentioned. It is in seven sections and easy to read.”

**Concluding Reflections**

At the session on concluding reflections, moderated by Prof Srivastava, Kathuria said the major thing that struck her was that the whole nation was facing change. The women's empowerment and development work started with charity, then it became welfare, then development, then empowerment and now it has reached agency. This is the paradigm shift that has happened. Without people putting in effort in this discourse, it wouldn't have been possible. She added that it had also struck her how technology was now seen as a solution to all the challenges.

Ghatak said one of the things that emerged was the neo liberal context and how forms of violence are much more brutal now. Domestic violence continues. In the last few days they have been talking about men and the talk now has to intersect with gender, caste, class, disability and religion. For this they are looking at strategies which will strengthen the dialogue.

Pawar mentioned that they worked on gender issues for two decades and it is now that it is happening in depth. Gender equality started by working with women and now it also means working with men. In colleges and universities they have engaged more. Health is a dimension
that needs focus. NGO collaboration and publications, campaigns, rural intervention and collaboration with political parties through talking on issues of masculinity, nationalism and militarization has led to a deeper discourse.

Prof Srivastava agreed that now we were all in a difficult situation where the meaning of politics has changed. He also added that One Billion Rising started in a mall in Delhi. “Neo liberalism that we all are so scared of also includes politics. Is it possible to change the world then? What kind of change are we expecting?” he expressed. He questioned if the old politics is possible now and till what limit can the word neo liberalism be avoided as this word is very close to everyone.

**Dialogue with Audience**

Patriarchy was also re-bouncing like the economy. Violence was becoming more brutal day by day. Something had changed. This world was giving space for consumerism but is it giving space for issues of equality?

There was sadness about the ending of old politics but there was a lot falsehood there too. Left politics had many drawbacks, for e.g. outsourcing. Was the liberal state good? Is there no equality in capitalism? There was a need of new ways to think around these issues and think about new politics.

Mendhapurkar expressed, “Media is coming up with new words now. Intolerance is one such new word. Why don’t we say that inclusion is ending? But the truth is there was no inclusion ever. There is no one saying we need to include. Is tolerant masculinity what we are expecting in the future?”
A need to build new solidarities was also felt.

**Stakeholder Viewpoint**

Abhijit Das stated masculinity was not being talked about in a vacuum. The current social context was giving urgency to the need to work on masculinity and equality. The work started with addressing violence against women but it cannot be stopped at that point.

Inviting external stakeholders from Population Foundation of India (PFI), Population Services International (PSI), OXFAM and UN Women to address the consultation, he said, “We need to know how our allies in the development sector look at this work.”

Seema Upadhyay, Population Foundation of India, stated how they wanted to focus on development and now the focus was on empowerment, regional work and neo liberal work. With these different themes, the approaches are also different. Men should be mentored and understood by women. NGOs should work with government bodies, political structures, parliament, state and panchayats. There is scope for work in community health programmes and what is needed are strategies that are clear and can integrate with government programmes as well.

Vidhu Prabha, Population Services International, said we are not external stakeholders, we are just stakeholders. There is a larger politics to this. There is no one cause we are working for. To do MenEngage, instrumentalism is one word that comes to mind.

Mary Thomas, Oxfam, said their experience of working on campaigns on land, education and gender justice had shown that all departments worked separately. She also said, “We need a new
language while talking to men. Not only because we need to reduce violence but because we are interested in talking to men. Next year we want to take this campaign forward and we have been thinking who to connect with,” she added.

**Jeevan, UN Women**, said he is not a gender expert but has been in the development sector for five years. He has seen the push of HeForShe and it’s a fabulous campaign. But is it really working or is it only a signature campaign? It's important to involve new stakeholders, including the film industry, media etc. We only look at binaries and we need to look at other genders as well. We are still struggling and trying to involve other genders, he stated.

Giving the vote of thanks, Mendhapurkar hoped that regional conclaves would come out with deeper understandings soon.

### List of Participants

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<th>Sr.No</th>
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<td>Abhijit Das</td>
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<td>Ajay Kumar</td>
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