



**MenEngage Alliance**

working with men and boys for gender equality

## Policy Brief

# Engaging men and boys in social norms transformation as a means to achieving Agenda 2030 and the SDGs

High Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development

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## Background

Gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, has become a priority of our global development agenda, as both an objective of, and a solution too, achieving the SDGs and Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development - with cross-cutting targets having been set within the framework that go far beyond Goal 5. **Agenda 2030 and the SDGs must be transformative and embrace a human rights-based approach which guarantees that no one is left behind**, including and especially - all women and girls worldwide. Achieving the SDGs also requires meaningful citizen participation into every stage of the process, from the development of the agenda, to its implementation, all the way through its monitoring and evaluation. **Women and girls must be at the center of SDG implementation** and it must be ensured that the meaningful participation of women's rights organization, activists and human rights defenders are prioritized at the highest levels.

## Engaging Men and Boys in Social Norm Transformation – Why?

Transforming deeply entrenched gender inequalities is essential for achieving sustainable development and driving meaningful change from our local to our global communities. Given that the lives of women and men are inextricably linked, working with men and boys is one critical piece of the puzzle to achieving Agenda 2030 and the SDGs, particularly in relation to Goal 5, in complement to and in support of the many decades of continued work and activism done by feminist women's rights organizations and activists. **Gender transformative approaches to engaging men and boys can contribute to achieving crucial goals and targets set by Agenda 2030 and the SDGs**, by engaging these key actors as agents of change in challenging harmful social norms, stereotypes, traditional practices, privileges and dismantling patriarchal power structures which perpetuate and underpin systemic gender inequalities across every society of the world.

Men and boys continue to experience many advantages in our patriarchal societies. At the same time, they are also affected by restrictive gender roles and norms that have negative consequences for themselves, and those around them. **Boys and men can play an important role as partners, allies, supporters and champions for gender equality, by learning about gender inequalities and human rights and actively challenging discriminatory gender norms and addressing power inequities between persons of different genders.** The engagement of men and boys must be done across all levels of society, from the individual, to the community to the institutional and systemic levels, and must include the engagement of community, religious and political leaders, most of whom are still men.

# How can engaging men and boys in social norms transformation help in the achievement of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs?

We, at the MenEngage Alliance, believe in strengthening a gender transformative framework for sustainable development and the achievement of gender equality, which is inclusive of engaging men and boys in transforming harmful masculinities as a means to achieving the SDGs, in particular those that relate to women's rights and gender justice.

Below, we provide a **comprehensive Call to Action on the engagement of men and boys** in social norms transformation for the achievement of the SDGs, in particular Goal 5. We call for scaled-up and institutionalized evidence-based gender-transformative interventions with men and boys that challenge the social and cultural norms which act as a barrier to gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

We encourage the use of these recommendations when engaging in gender equality advocacy towards the attainment of the SDGs, carried out with **governments and UN Agencies by CSOs at the local, country, regional and global levels.**

These recommendations were developed from a consultation held by the MenEngage Alliance, in partnership with UN Women and UNFPA and in collaboration with ABAAD, Breakthrough, CARE, IDS, IPPF, Promundo, Rutgers, Sonke Gender Justice, and Women Peacemakers Program, at the 61<sup>st</sup> Conference on the Status of Women.

## Call to Action

### Engaging Men in Boys in Social Norms Transformation for the Achievement of the SDGs

If we are to achieve the full realization of Agenda 2030, we must work in partnership as a global community towards implementing actions which address all of the specific targets and indicators within each goal. The following section provides our recommendations for working in compliment with women's rights organizations and activist in the achievement of the SDGs – outlining specific sub-indicators on engaging men and boys which will contribute to reaching the indicators, and thus the targets within Goal 5 and others. These sub-indicators, accompanied by concrete recommendations on how to carry out the work of engaging men and boys responsibly across each issue, will be helpful in shaping the global framework on 'engaging boys and men in gender justice' around Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. These recommendations are central to the ongoing work of the MenEngage Alliance and have been incorporated into our Strategic Framework, informing our core approach to the work of engaging men and boys.

#### Sub-Indicators on engaging men and boys in ending all forms of violence and discrimination towards all women and girls

- Increase in men and boys who condemn all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls (SDG Targets 5.1; 5.2; 5.3)
- Reduced homophobia/transphobia and increased support for LGBTQI rights and diverse sexual orientations and gender identities (SOGI)
- Increase in men's and boys' physical and mental health seeking behavior, including seeking help to change violent behaviors (SDG Targets 5.6 and 5.2)

#### How to engage men and boys responsibly in eliminating all forms of violence and discrimination:

- Design and Implement, as appropriate, policies and programs that seek to address the **root causes of all forms of violence including social norms, stereotypes, beliefs and attitudes towards power, privileges, stemming from structural injustices and patriarchal power structures.**
- Providing context around the social systems at large as an overall framework for ending all violence towards all women and girls. This violence is manifested in many ways including sexual violence, institutional violence, economic violence, homophobic violence and violence between men and boys, but by providing a model for combating the root causes, we **avoid separating these approaches into silos.**

- Carry out evaluations and audits on laws related to ending GBV, domestic violence and violence against all women and girls that are not properly implemented and develop interventions that **tackle the barriers to their implementation, including social norms**. Encourage governments to see their role in social norms transformation, not just in the implementation of policies and laws.
- Carry out **gender audits of military, law enforcement, and the justice and security sectors** to assess whether they perpetuate violence or progress toward respecting human rights, and to provide recommendations accordingly.

#### Sub-indicators on engaging men and boys in SRHR for all

- Increase in men's and boys' roles, responsibilities and access to SRHR - including family planning, child and maternal health, safe and legal abortions, HIV/AIDS and STIs treatment and prevention services (SDG Targets 5.6 & 3.7)

#### How to engage men and boys responsibly in SRHR for all:

- Implement **Comprehensive Sexuality Education** in schools, that provides accurate information in addition to a focus on **gender, masculinities and healthy relationships**.
- **Target men in maternal health programs**, as an entry point to encourage them to be more involved in their partner's health as well as their own.
- Create **youth-friendly health services**, and **spaces for peer-to-peer conversations** and learning between and among boys and girls in order to break taboos around sexuality.

#### Sub-indicators on engaging men and boys in unpaid care & women's economic empowerment

- Increased responsibility and uptake of unpaid care by men and boys' (SDG Target 5.4)
- Increased support among men and boys for women and girls' full and effective participation and equal opportunities in leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life – including in historically masculine and male-dominated institutions (SDG Target 5.5)

#### How to engage men and boys unpaid care & women's economic empowerment:

- **Work through the health system to change social norms around caregiving**, for example by involving men more in pre and post-natal care, and using these visits as an entry point into fatherhood programs etc.
- At the state level, implement laws supportive of men's caregiving, including **paid, non-transferable parental leave, and childcare provisions**.
- Introduce **caring as a key competency in education systems** and promote diverse job skills for all, as well as transform the stereotypical gendered division of labor.
- Work with the media to promote **non-stereotypical, caring depictions of men**.

#### Sub-indicators on engaging men and boys in peace & active non-violence

- Increase in men's and boys' active non-violent attitudes, roles and responsibilities to prevent violence, war, crises and armed conflict (SDG Targets 16.1, 16.2, 16.3, 16.10 & 16.B)

#### How to engage men and boys responsibly in peace & active non-violence:

- Provide **psychosocial support to boys and men in conflict and post-conflict situations**, particularly ex-combatants, in order to deconstruct ideals of masculinities that encourage them to use violence and train them on active non-violence and alternative masculinities.
- **Identify and work with male allies in political systems** to support the increased participation of women in political and peacebuilding processes.
- **Address militarism as a cause and consequence of patriarchy** and work to redefine security and protection towards a human security model.

# About the MenEngage Alliance



**MenEngage Alliance is an international network of over 700 civil society organizations (CSOs) across 70 countries in 8 regions who work through gender transformative approaches to engage men and boys in gender equality.** The Alliance seeks to add value to existing initiatives, by **engaging men and boys, along with women, girls and people with diverse gender identities, in transforming masculinities, unequal power relations and patriarchal systems.** The Alliance plays a pivotal role in shaping the global ‘men and masculinities’ discourse and agenda, particularly in the areas of **GBV prevention, advancing SRHR for all, redistributing unpaid care-work, and peace and security.** Our work with men and boys stems from and honors the pioneering work and ongoing leadership of women’s rights organizations and movements. **Accountability to the women’s rights movement and to other historically-oppressed social groups is central to our work** and we are committed to working as allies and in partnership with women’s rights leaders, organizations, networks and movements.

## Vision

**A world where all people are equal and free from discrimination, and in which gender justice and human rights are promoted and protected.**

## Mission

MenEngage Global Alliance works to transform unequal power relations and patriarchal systems by:

- ✓ **Transforming masculinities**
- ✓ **Working with men and boys through intersectional feminist approaches**
- ✓ **Building inclusive Alliances from local to regional to global levels**
- ✓ **Fostering joint actions in partnership with women’s rights, gender- and other social justice movements.**

## Our Beliefs

We focus on **gender-transformative approaches that address root causes of gender inequalities**, working towards transforming the social systems that perpetuate stereotypes, unequal power, and privilege.

We believe that within the larger framing of attaining gender justice for all women and girls, **the work of engaging men and boys plays an important role as a supplemental strategy** in the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls

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