Introduction

The sixty-second Commission on the Status of Women (CSW62) took place from 12-23 March 2018 in the United Nations headquarters in New York. More than 4,300 representatives from over 600 civil society organizations, and 170 member states attended the meeting.

The Alliance was represented by a delegation of over 30 members from Africa, the Caribbean, Europe, South Asia, Latin America and North America, as well as the Global Secretariat Team. Acknowledging that many of our members were unable to attend the event, we have compiled this report which summarizes the key policy outcomes of the session as well as a summary of relevant side events, which specifically highlighted a ‘men and masculinities lens’ towards the achievement of women’s and girls’ rights and gender justice.

Growing backlash against CSO participation at yet another CSW

MenEngage Alliance is deeply concerned by the continued trend of increasingly restricted CSO access to CSW, due to visa refusals to the United States and increased civil society access to the UN under the guise of “security”. The theme of this year’s event focused on rural women and girls, yet it was grassroots activists from rural areas, especially from the Global South, that were disproportionately left out of the conversation in this year’s session. UN Women, in coordination with the Office of the General Secretary, and led by Women’s Rights Caucus members CIVICUS and FEMNET in coordination with other women’s rights organizations, issued a proposal for combating these challenges next year, including the.

About CSW

CSW is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. Every year, CSW is a unique opportunity for activists, CSOs and others working for gender equality around the world to come together with governments to take stock of progress made towards gender equality, and collectively identify ways forward.

The theme of this year’s CSW was “Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls”
issuing of proper procedures notices to be sent to consular offices around the world in preparation for CSW63. MenEngage Alliance joined this effort, advocating for the development of new protocols to ensure visas for all. Furthermore, we supported the tracking and reporting examples of visa restrictions among the broader Alliance and provided this information to the coordinated mapping effort led by CIVICUS and FEMNET.

In a global climate of increasing backlash against human rights and shrinking space for civil society in many countries around the world, the UN system as per its mandate ought to be a fundamental mechanism for civil society to have their voices heard. We urge the UN to address this lack of representation to truly ensure that no one is left behind and that everyone can participate at CSW. MenEngage Alliance will continue with its advocacy, together with women’s rights and social justice movements, for an enabling and just civil society environment and participatory UN system in the coming years.

**Highlights**

- **Commitment from governments to an ambitious set of measures to empower and promote the rights of women and girls living in rural areas**, including ensuring their access to land and resources, economic opportunities and political participation. In addition, there was broad support among governments and civil society for gender transformative approaches to engage men and boys for gender equality, including in the **agreed conclusions.** (page 3)

- **Active participation of MenEngage youth representatives from Sri Lanka, Nicaragua and Uganda, including at the CSW Youth Dialogue.** The Alliance was a co-organizer of the Youth Dialogue, and co-organized the interactive skills building session on engaging boys and young men in preventing gender-based violence in rural context together with Voices of Humans, NextGenMen and Puntos de Encuentro. The Youth Dialogue this year gathered over 200 youth activists and produced a comprehensive set of **policy recommendations to governments.** (page 9)

- **An array of insightful side events by MenEngage Alliance members and partners**, including Care International, Muslims for Progressive Values, Plan International, Sonke Gender Justice, Promundo, ICRW, ManUp campaign, ACEV, Women for Women International, UN Women and Athena Network. (page 11)
✓ MenEngage Alliance’s flagship event at CSW62 “MenEngage on the spot: An Accountability Dialogue on the work of the Alliance, past, present and future, after 10 years of existence”, a critical discussion in a safe space among the Alliance members and partners, from women’s rights, LGBTQIA+ and other social justice activists which addressed key accountability concerns, challenges and opportunities around the Alliance’s work to engage men and boys and transform masculinities (see this summary report)

1. Advocacy and outcome documents

MenEngage Alliance advocacy at CSW62 was informed by the following key points:

- **In order to prevent and respond to violence against all women and girls, its root causes must be tackled.** This should include, but not be limited to, working with men and boys, to challenge the underlying attitudes and social norms that lead them to commit violence.
- **Men’s use of violence against women and girls is not random.** Drivers for men’s use of violence include witnessing or experiencing violence as a child, norms and attitudes that support violence against women and girls, a lack of accountability and context of impunity, and economic stress.
- The necessary transformation of harmful social norms to prevent gender-based violence and promote gender justice can only be realized if international, regional and national human rights and standards recognize these root causes of violence and addresses the individual/relationship, community, civil society, institutional and governmental levels simultaneously and in a mutually reinforcing manner.
- **Well-designed gender-transformative programs with men and boys that change underlying destructive gender norms are effective in reducing violence against women and girls.** These programs seek to reshape gender relations to be more equitable, and free both women and men from the impact of destructive gender and sexual norms. However, programmes remain mostly NGO led, small scale, short term and have failed to reach large numbers of men and boys. In order for work with men and boys to have the desired impact, a more concerted effort is needed to take these programs to scale and institutionalize them.

Negotiations and Advocacy

The UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres spoke at the opening ceremony about his personal commitment to gender equality, and the relevance of engaging men and boys in this struggle:
“Progress for women and girls means changing the unequal power dynamics that underpin discrimination and violence. This is not only the greatest human rights challenge of our time. It is also in everyone’s interests. Discrimination against women damages communities, organizations, companies, economies and societies. That is why all men should support women’s rights and gender equality. And that is why I consider myself a proud feminist.”

He also participated in a townhall meeting where he answered civil society’s questions regarding sexual harassment in the UN system, visa refusals at CSW, and other issues. During the meeting he showed huge support towards advancing women’s rights and empowerment within the UN System and International Human rights bodies, including ensuring the UN Gender Parity initiative is fully realized. However, there were also concerns voiced among women’s rights activists around whether Guterres will live up to his commitments, and the need to continue holding him accountable for implementation. Watch the full video here.

Several speakers referenced the ‘#MeToo’ movement and its relevance at this year’s CSW. Executive Director of UN Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka referenced the movement in her opening address:

“The ‘MeToo’ movement and ‘Time’s up’ have showed us change can happen fast. And that women must be believed. This is a moment that we intend to sustain for all. Due process is important, but we must remember that only a handful of men have so far experienced the consequences of their actions, while one billion women still live with the long-lasting after-effects of violence. Their story has to be told.”

Special Rapporteur on violence against women Dubravka Šimonović also mentioned the ‘Ni Una Menos’ movement in Latin America.

“These ground breaking and transformative movements must be supported in all parts of the world…… Our challenge now is to find ways and construct the means to support this and similar movements, with the aim of achieving a change that will put a lasting end to tolerance of violence against women”

MenEngage Alliance Advocacy

MenEngage Alliance members and Global Secretariat actively participated in advocacy throughout CSW to ensure the adoption of progressive outcomes in the session’s agreed conclusions. Two MenEngage Alliance caucus meetings were held for members to discuss
the negotiations and share insights as the session advanced. The MenEngage Alliance Global Secretariat closely collaborated and advocated alongside the Women’s Rights Caucus, the primary advocacy collective of women’s and SOGI rights organizations at CSW, in order to advance progressive outcomes in the Agreed Conclusions, promoting agreements across the full women’s rights agenda. As part of the Alliance’s participation in the Women’s Rights Caucus, we drafted a factsheet that informed conversations with member states on feminist-informed, gender transformative, human rights-based language to engage men and boys and transform patriarchal masculinities for the achievement of the rights and empowerment of all women and girls. The document provides key language from prior international agreements that governments have already committed to. In our advocacy efforts, MenEngage Alliance pushed for the removal of repeating general references on engaging men and boys, particularly references that were binary-reinforcing (women as compared with men). Instead, we worked to strengthen one comprehensive paragraph which provided in-depth gender-transformative articulation on the roles of men and boys in upholding the rights and empowerment of all women and girls in rural areas. Furthermore, we worked to strengthen agreements on appropriate men’s roles in the paragraph on unpaid care. (see section below “Transforming unequal power relations and engaging men and boys.”

**Agreed Conclusions**

Member states came to a consensus on a set of Agreed Conclusions to advance the situation of rural women and girls. This was a relevant milestone since the last time this subject from the Being Platform for Action was under review, in 2014, governments were unable to agree and the negotiations failed. The CSW62 conclusions recognize the structural barriers faced by women and girls living in rural areas, some of the world’s most marginalized people, and provide recommendations to address these barriers and promote their rights. These include ensuring adequate living standards with equal access to land and productive assets, ending poverty, enhancing food security and nutrition, decent work, infrastructure and technology, education and health and ending all forms of violence and harmful practices against all women and girls.

The conclusions include particularly strong language ensuring access to quality education for all women and girls living in rural areas, including by tackling social norms and stereotypes:

**Eliminate gender disparities and commit to scale up financing and investments in public education systems to fulfill the right to education for women and girls in rural areas by addressing gender-based discrimination, negative social norms and gender stereotypes in education systems, including in curricula, textbooks and teaching methodologies; combat gender norms that devalue girls’ education and prevent women and girls from accessing education**
The conclusions also call for measures to address the stigma around menstruation that prevents young women from attending school, and programmes to allow pregnant and parenting young women to remain in education.

The document contains progressive language on providing support to families in all their diversities, and new commitments on addressing reproductive health disparities, maternal mortality, health workforce, and a reaffirmation of existing commitments on sexual and reproductive health.

In the context of increasing backlash against women’s rights and shrinking civil society space, the conclusions importantly include a recognition of the importance of women’s civil society groups and women human rights defenders and urge governments to:

Support the important role of civil society actors in promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms of rural women; take steps to protect them, including women human rights defenders, and to integrate a gender perspective into creating a safe and enabling environment for the defence of human rights and to prevent violations and abuses against them in rural areas, inter alia, threats, harassment and violence, in particular on issues relating to labour rights, environment, land and natural resources; and combat impunity by taking steps to ensure that violations or abuses are promptly and impartially investigated and that those responsible are held accountable (paragraph 46rrr)
The conclusions call on governments to respect and promote the rights of, and implement measures to combat discrimination against, indigenous women, afro-descendent women, older women and women with disabilities living in rural areas. They urge governments to strengthen the resilience and capacities of women and girls living in rural contexts to respond to and prevent climate change.

They also call for significantly increased investment to close resource gaps for achieving gender equality. They highlight that additional funds should be mobilized from a range of sources, call on governments to combat the illicit financial flows and encourage developed country governments to fulfil their official development assistance commitments.

Transforming unequal power relations and engaging men and boys

Addressing root causes and tackling harmful social norms and gender stereotypes integrated throughout the agreed conclusions. The conclusions include the engagement of men and boys in promoting the rights and empowerment of women and girls living in rural contexts. The conclusions call on governments to:

- Fully engage men and boys to take an active part in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, including those in rural areas, and the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls both in public and private spheres; design and implement national policies and programmes that address the role and responsibility of men and boys and aim to ensure equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men in caregiving and domestic work; transform with the aim to eliminate those social norms that condone violence against women and girls, and attitudes and social norms by which women and girls are regarded as subordinate to men and boys, including by understanding and addressing the root causes of gender inequality such as unequal power relations, social norms, practices and stereotypes that perpetuate discrimination against women and girls; and engage them in efforts to promote and achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls for the

- Recognize, reduce and redistribute rural women and girls disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work, as well as contributions to on-farm and off-farm production, by promoting policies and initiatives supporting the reconciliation of work and family life and the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, through flexibility in working arrangements without reductions in labour and social protections, and through the provision of infrastructure, technology and public services, such as water and sanitation, renewable energy, transport and information and communications technology, as well as accessible, affordable and quality childcare and care facilities and maternity, paternity or parental leave and by challenging gender stereotypes and negative social norms and facilitating men’s increased participation in unpaid and domestic work and family responsibilities, including as fathers and caregivers (paragraph 46gg)
The conclusions also refer to the engagement of men and boys in combatting gender-based violence and harassment in school settings, and in promoting women’s participation in peace-building efforts.

**Resolution on Beijing +25 (2020)**

A resolution was put forward to advance the potential organization of a fifth world conference on women. This proposal was closely monitored by feminist and women’s rights groups, due to the risky nature of opening up the ‘movement’ to another world conference, and hence, outcome document, which could undermine the Beijing Platform for Action and its progressive text – especially in light of the consolidated regressive positions by many member state blocs at international policy spaces. The main feminist coalitions lobbied instead for an ‘implementation conference’ to review member state progress towards the realization of the Beijing Platform for Action. This was successfully achieved and has been scheduled as a 1-day event as part of the General Assembly in 2020. The outcome will be a Chairs’ text.

**Critical reflections on this year’s policy outcomes**

MenEngage Alliance supports this comprehensive set of commitments by governments to promote the rights of women and girls living in rural contexts and to ensure “no one is left behind”, the aspiration of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. We urge member states to act urgently on these commitments and fully implement the recommendations of the commission.

We welcome the increased interest in and support for engaging men and boys in gender equality that was evident at this year’s CSW throughout the official proceedings and parallel events. However, we are also aware of challenges, concerns and potential risks involved with this increased interest and uptake, if it is not carried out in human-rights based, feminist-informed, gender transformative ways, fully accountable to women’s, girls’ and SOGI voices. Throughout CSW, both in our policy recommendations and at side events, MenEngage Alliance emphasized the need to ensure that initiatives that engage men and boys do so through challenging power, privilege, social norms and stereotypes and actually contribute to the advancement of the rights of women and girls.

While this year’s agreed conclusions show signs of progress, there were some significant gaps. In particular, the conclusions do not reference abortion or protecting the rights of the LGBTQI community. In addition, a paragraph on the rights of migrant women and girls from rural contexts was regretfully removed.

One concerning trend is the increased polarization of member states around some of these more ‘controversial’ issues, including an increasingly regressive stance of official US participants, and increased coordinated engagement by opposition groups seeking to undermine women’s rights. The Women’s Rights Caucus group tasked with monitoring opposition, noted a particularly aggressive presence of opposition groups at this year’s session and pointed towards coordinated efforts to disrupt side-events focused on SOGI rights and SRHR. In addition, they noted an increased number of side-events and other
mobilizations organized by these groups including a protest held outside UNICEF denouncing comprehensive sexuality education for youth. As we witness this growing backlash against human rights and a rise in religious and other forms of fundamentalisms around the world, concerted advocacy efforts and feminist movement building will continue to be important as we move forward.

2. Youth Participation

Youth Dialogue and policy recommendations

As a continuation of the previous two years’ successful CSW Youth Fora, a Youth Dialogue was held this year to bring together youth activists and leaders to discuss the issues faced by young women and girls from rural contexts, and ensure young people’s voices were heard. Over 200 youth activists, many from rural communities, gathered to discuss the structural barriers faced by young women and girls and identify concrete solutions. The event was co-organized by UN Women, the office of the UNSG’s Youth Envoy, WAGGGS, Plan International, AWID, MenEngage Alliance, Act Alliance, World YWCA, FRIDA, The We Effect, The Working Group on Girls.

In advance of the dialogue, a global Twitter consultation and a series of focus groups were held in rural communities to enable rural young women and girls that were unable to attend the event input towards the outcome document. During the one-day event, inspiring speakers shared their stories and participants engaged in passionate discussions on key issues affecting their lives, including education, health, violence, economic justice, land rights, climate change and access to ICT.

Jaha Dukureh, anti-FGM activist from The Gambia, told the audience:

“As young people, what all of us need to understand is that using our voice doesn’t cost anything. It is our responsibility to show the world that we are united. We are united for the same purpose: justice for girls and young women”.

Ensuring young people’s representation and leadership in decision-making processes was a cross-cutting theme of the event. Edward Ndopu from the World Economic Forum, originally from South Africa, remarked

"the barrier [for young people] is not in participation, the barrier is to leadership. I come from a continent with the world’s largest youth demographic. But in the African continent, when we look at the people who represent us in office, the average age of Members of Parliament is between 65 and 70."

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, the Executive Director of UN Women, in her opening address observed, “the first thing that worries me about the situation of young people and women is the normalization of exclusion. One challenge and responsibility of the UN is to
address this normalization." She urged young people to form alliances and hold their governments accountable for this exclusion.

As part of the event’s line-up of panel discussions, breakout sessions and skills labs, MenEngage Alliance, NextGenMen, Voices of Humans and Puntos de Encuentro co-organized a skills-building session on "Working with boys and young men for the prevention of violence against women and girls in rural areas”. The interactive session focused on arts-based tools to engage young men and boys in challenging stereotypes around masculinities.

To conclude the event, a set of policy recommendations was presented. The recommendations urge policy-makers to ensure access to free quality education – including human rights education, digital literacy and comprehensive sexuality education, provide young women and girls in rural areas with increased opportunities to meaningfully participate in the labour market, ensure well-funded accessible services for survivors of violence in rural areas, adopt legislation that gives girls and young women equal inheritance and property rights, and to ensure meaningfully representation and leadership of young people in decision making at all levels. The recommendations call on governments to:

- Implement programmes beginning in early childhood to engage boys and young men in challenging harmful, patriarchal masculinities and promoting gender equality and the rights of young women and girls.”

- Implement public media campaigns that challenge gender stereotypes, harmful social norms and promote equitable, non-violent masculinities.”

And to:

- Engage a broad range of societal stakeholders and influencers, such as educators, social workers, politicians, media and popular culture figures, and religious, cultural and traditional figures leaders, as well as faith communities, in challenging patriarchal norms social and cultural attitudes and as allies in the promotion of women’s rights.”

The recommendations were presented during the official negotiations and referenced in Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka’s CSW closing speech.
Engaging Youth Networks: The real challenge of SDGs using a youth and gender lens

Another space for youth participation at CSW was the event “Engaging Youth Networks: The real challenge of SDGs using a youth and gender lens”, organized by the ManUp Campaign. Solomy Awiidi from Refugee Law Project and the Global Secretariat spoke on the closing panel and shared her experience as a girl growing up in Kampala vis-a-vis the plight of young girls growing up in rural areas where she worked for close to 5 years. She also used this platform to encourage partners already working with young people to focus not only within formal institutions such as schools since there are a sizable number of girls and boys out of the formal school system. For more information about this event visit the ManUp campaign website.

4. Side events

How to walk the talk: System-wide strategy on Gender Parity

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<tr>
<th>Monday, 19 March</th>
<th>Organized by: UN Women</th>
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<tr>
<td>Speakers:</td>
<td>Ana María Menéndez, Under-Secretary-General and Secretary-General’s Senior Adviser on Policy</td>
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<td>Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director, UN Women</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Radhika Balakrishnan, Faculty Director at the Center for Women’s Global Leadership and Professor in Women’s and Gender Studies at Rutgers University</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dean Peacock, Co-Executive Director of Sonke Gender Justice</td>
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This side event focused on the Secretary-General’s promise to deliver Gender Parity within the UN System by 2028. A discussion on steps taken to date, as well as challenges and ongoing plans to mitigate barriers to the realization of this important goal were discussed among representatives from the UN, the Member States and Civil Society. Ana María Menéndez, Under-Secretary-General, noted that this was first requested by CSOs in 2000 and that 18 years later, the most important difference in achieving this effort was that the UN had developed a clear road map to its realization including setting deadlines. She also noted that this is not just a question of numbers, but a shift in culture and the creation of an enabling environment. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka noted that the most important driver to success is in this effort is women’s leadership. She pointed towards the ongoing argument posed by many that “we can’t find qualified women” and encouraged all agencies to prepare the pipeline of women for high ranking jobs in order to ensure qualified women are put forward as candidates for managerial level UN posts. Additionally, she noted the particular challenge around achieving gender parity at country level, which will require wider transformation of cultural norms around women’s roles in the workplace in many contexts.
Dean Peacock, MenEngage Alliance member and ED of Sonke Gender Justice reinforced the global call that “Time is up” noting that “its 2018, and we are passed due on achieving women’s and girls’ rights”. He noted the critical importance of holding men in positions of power to account and of establishing the appropriate mechanisms in place in order to ensure that the UN system can continue to promote women’s leadership while attending through legal means to latent and overt backlash within organizational cultures against women in positions of leadership.

**Rural realities in the Nordics – Leaving men behind?**

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<th>Monday 12 March</th>
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<tr>
<td>Organized by: The Nordic Council of Ministers</td>
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<td>Panellists:</td>
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<td>Gary Barker, Promundo</td>
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<td>Sari Raassina, MP and President of the Council for Gender Equality, Finland</td>
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<td>Bafana Khumalo, Sonke Gender Justice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aili Keskitalo, President of the Sami Parliament, Norway</td>
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<td>Naaja Nathanielsen, Director of Prison and Probation Service, Greenland</td>
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<td>Karin Gahnström Jonsson, Culture Editor of Östersunds-Posten and community activist in Glesbygdsgirls, Sweden</td>
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This side event addressed the pattern in rural areas in the Nordic region that when women migrate to cities for university education, men stay behind and risk reclusion. Panellists discussed potential solutions to reverse this trend and make rural areas more attractive to women, including more skilled jobs, better digital infrastructure and new gender norms. Panellists highlighted the ‘hidden inequality’ in the Nordic countries, a region known for its relative gender equality. The importance of giving women opportunities to participate in political life in rural areas was stressed, as well as the need to make rural areas safer for women by providing services for preventing and responding to gender-based violence. A lack of trust in institutions in rural communities was acknowledged, in particular among the Sami community, due to assimilation policies and a lack of cultural sensitivity. Panellists also discussed the need to form new gender norms for men and women in rural areas, in order to prevent gender-based violence and get more women involved in agricultural work.

**Digital Gender Violence and Hat Speech; The role of men, the legislator and implications of democracy**

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<th>Monday 12 March</th>
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<tr>
<td>Organized by: Icelandic Ministry of Welfare, the Parliament of Iceland (Althingi), the Icelandic National Committee of UN Women, and the Icelandic Women’s Rights Association.</td>
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<td>Panellists:</td>
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<td>Ásmundur Einar Daðason, Minister of Social Affairs and Equality in Iceland</td>
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<td>Albertína Friðbjörg Elíasdóttir, Member of Alþingi, the Icelandic Parliament</td>
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<td>María Rún Bjarnadóttir, Lawyer and Doctoral Researcher, University of Sussex</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unnsteinn Manuel Stefánsson, Film-Maker and Champion of the Icelandic National Committee of UNWomen in Iceland</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brynhildur Heiðar- og Ómarsdóttir, Director of the Icelandic Women's Rights Association.</td>
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This event drew attention to the challenges and possibilities inherent in online communication and social media. Panellists discussed the impact of online gendered abuse and digital violence, which can discourage women from participating in democratic discussion online and drive women activists...
offline and thereby out of public spaces. Panellists highlighted that current legal frameworks are inadequate to deal with digital violence. They discussed the need to include gender in hate crime legislation and discussed the challenges in holding social media platforms liable for digital gender-based violence. Panellists also called attention to some examples of online feminist activism such as #MeToo and #FreeTheNipple, and how social media can be a positive force by creating and amplifying social movements for change. The importance of getting men and boys involved in online activism and online violence prevention was emphasized, as well as the need to create spaces that enable men to critically reflect on gender, power and privilege. Panellists highlighted promising examples of the Barbershop conference organized in the Icelandic parliament and Barbershop Toolbox.

Under the Spotlight: Ending violence against all women and girls

Monday 12 March
Speakers:
Amina J. Mohammed-UN Deputy Secretary-General
Neven Mimica, European Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development
Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka Executive Director, UN Women
Helga Schmid-Secretary General, European External Action Service
Ana Leticia Aguilar Theissen, Presidential Secretary for Women, Guatemala
Lizzie Kiama, Disability Rights & Inclusion Professional, Kenya
Tarcila Rivera, Indigenous Rights Activist, Peru
Dubravka Simonovic, UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women
Miki Wali, Trans and Youth Feminist, Fiji

The Spotlight Initiative is a new, global, multi-year partnership focused on eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG) funded by the UN and the EU. The Initiative will deploy targeted, large-scale investments in Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Pacific and the Caribbean, aimed at achieving significant improvements in the lives of women and girls.

At this event the speakers shared that the initiative aims to support innovations to prevent and respond to all forms of violence against women, with particular regional interest and focus on domestic and family violence, sexual and gender-based violence, harmful practices, femicide, and trafficking in persons. It was announced that in 2018, new projects will be launched in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Mexico and Argentina. UN Women highlighted the importance of involving civil society in the design, implementation and monitoring of all Spotlight programmes and intervention. The speakers, especially representing civil society and indigenous women, highlighted the importance of a bottom-up approach and ensuring that these initiatives build on the existing strengths of these focus areas and
stressed the importance of addressing multiple and intersectional forms of violence faced by groups of women and girls, such as LGBTQ groups, indigenous women, and women with disabilities. This initiative includes “engaging men and boys” as one of its strategic pillars to prevent and responding to VAWG but during the event there was no further elaboration on what that will look like as part of the initiative. For the full video of this event, please see [here](#).

**Ending a lifetime of violence against women and girls in conflict and humanitarian settings: What Works?**

**Tuesday 13 March**
**Organized by:** Girls Global Program, South African Medical Research Council and UK Mission to UN
**Panellists:** Professor Rachel Jewkes, MRC, South Africa
Dr Mary Ellsberg, George Washington University
Dr Lori Heise, John Hopkins University
Ms Sophia Wanjiku Ngugi, International Rescue Committee

This event shared new insights from the first release of evaluation findings, on the nature, extent and drivers of VAWG in conflict and humanitarian settings, and what this means for policy and practice. The speakers emphasised that there is growing recognition of both the scale and the many forms of violence experienced by women and girls in conflict and emergencies, as well as of the life-saving nature of programmes that respond to it. Speakers stressed that a lack of understanding of the key drivers, as well as a lack of evidence about which programmes are most effective in preventing and responding to this violence, is holding donors, multilaterals and NGOs back from effectively mitigating, reducing, and preventing VAWG in emergencies. Three years into this programme, the panellists shared new knowledge, tools and findings around effectively conducting rigorous and ethical research on VAWG in conflicts and emergencies. The participants raised several queries regarding the accessibility and use by practitioners of these reports and tools, to which MRC responded that they plan to do rigorous dissemination and deliver a range of widely available research and policy outputs. MRC is willing to collaborate with MenEngage Alliance and the Global Secretariat in disseminating and doing concrete follow-up on the use of this knowledge and materials to inform violence prevention programs internationally.

**Male Champions of Change:**
**Accountability for Accelerating Progress on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Rural Women**

**Tuesday 13 March**
**Organized by:** the Government of Australia
**Panellists:**
Kelly O’Dwyer, MP Minister for Women (Chair)
Elizabeth Brodrick, AO Founder of Male Champions of Change
Kate Jenkins, Sex Discrimination Commissioner
Brett James, Commissioner for Federal Police
Tim Reed, CEO of MYOB
Joanne Farrell, Managing Director Rio Tinto Australia

Male Champions for Change is an Australian initiative that bring together male leaders who are committed to step up and be accountable for achieving gender equality. It has now grown to 160 leaders across all sectors of the workforce and is being replicated in countries around the world. It addresses issues such as domestic violence as a workplace issue,
everyday sexism, the gender pay gap, and women’s representation in non-traditional sectors. Panellists shared strategies to create gender-equal, violence-free workplaces and engage men and boys in this effort. They discussed the challenges of encouraging men to avail of flexible work policies and paternal leave, and the need for cultural change in this regard. Panellists discussed the unintended consequences of the #MeToo movement, and how, although men have begun to notice gender inequality in the workplace, in many cases they feel isolated by the movement and afraid to act. The importance of implementing policies to prevent workplace violence was discussed, as well as treating family violence as a workplace issue by implementing appropriate policies to create awareness and support survivors.

**Documentary screening and panel discussion: Changing negative social norms to prevent violence against women and girls in rural settings**

**Tuesday 13 March**
**Organized by:** Plan International
**Speakers:**
- CEO Anne-Birgitte Albrectsen, Emma Puig De la Bella Casa, Plan International
- Captain Hajat Janet Mukwaya, Minister of Gender Labour and Social Affairs Uganda
- Joni van de Sand, MenEngage Alliance
- Maria Oborto, Indigenous Wayuu women network of Venezuela
- Alex Munive, Plan International

This event was a Screening of the film ‘Me Too’ by Plan International, which documents the work the organization is doing with boys and young men in Latin America to involve them in ending violence against girls and young women. The film screening was followed by a panel discussion which addressed what works to change social norms and prevent violence against women and girls. Panellists discussed policies to address the intersection between toxic masculinities and violence, including how the government of Uganda is engaging men and boys to prevent violence against women and girls.

**Understanding Masculinities in the Middle East and North Africa Region**

**Wednesday 14 March**
**Organized by:** Promundo, UN Women, SIDA
**Panellists:**
- Haifa al-Agha, Minister of Women’s Affairs in Palestine
- Dhafer L’Abidine, Guest of Honor, Tunisian Actor
- Eva Johansson, Lead Gender Policy Advisor, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)
- Mohammad Naciri, Regional Director, UN Women Arab States
- Gary Barker, President and CEO, Promundo-US
- Lena Karlsson, UN Women Programme Manager
- Anthony Keedi, Masculinities Technical Advisor, ABAAD-Resource Centre for Gender Equality

This side event presented the results and implications from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES), the largest ever multi-country study carried out in the region to examine men and women’s attitudes to masculinity and gender. Panellists discussed the study’s findings, particularly the counter-intuitive finding that young men in the region have similar or less gender-equal attitudes than older men. Fatherhood was identified as a key entry point for men in the region, and a short video was screened which told the stories of four men in the region and their experiences with changing social norms and prevention of violence against women and girls.
experiences being involved fathers and supporting gender equality. Promising examples of working with men and boys for gender equality in the region were highlighted, such as UN Women’s regional campaign ‘Because I am a Man’, and ABAAD’s work in the region to engage young men in transforming masculinities and promoting gender equality.

**Engaging Men and Boys in Partnership with Women and Girls**

This event focused on engaging men and boys to address and prevent violence against women and girls, including harmful gender norms and unequal power dynamics. Representatives from the Canadian government spoke about their decision to advance with the allocation of 'additional funds' (not from the gender budget) for the development of a strategy on engaging men and boys, and why it had decided to do so, citing the critical role that men and boys can play in helping to dismantle traditional, social and cultural gender roles. Promundo presented highlights from its global IMAGES research on attitudes and behaviours of men and boys of all ages across many contexts, highlighting the need to contextualize interventions based on unique expressions of masculinities. They also presented on some of the key entry-points towards engaging men and boys, including through fatherhood. Michael Kaufman, presenting as a Promundo Fellow, also shared his experiences as co-founder of White Ribbon, presenting examples of the global proliferation of this campaign to stand against violence towards women, sharing heartfelt pictures and stories of groups of men having taken up the campaign across the world and used to begin conversations and take action on violence towards women.

**Wednesday, 14 March**

**Organized by:** Government of Canada, Promundo, International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), Icelandic Permanent Mission to the UN

**Panellists:** Hon. Maryam Monsef, Minister of Status of Women Canada (SWC)
Asmundur Einar Daðason, Icelandic Minister of Social Affairs and Equality
Terry Duguid, Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women Canada (SWC)
Dr. Gary Barker, President & CEO, Promundo
Allie Glinski, Gender and Evaluation Specialist, International Center for Research on Women (ICRW)
Dr. Michael Kaufman, Co-Founder, White Ribbon Campaign; Senior Fellow, Promundo
Mitigator or exacerbator of violence? Exploring the role of social media in addressing gender-based violence and torture

Panellists at this event highlighted the double-edged role of social media as both an exacerbator of violence, and a key tool to fight against violence. The results of a study on online violence in South Africa were shared which found that online violence is increasing and there is a need for proper legislation to address this growing problem. It was also stressed that young people are increasingly sharing videos and photos of sexual assault on social media which can normalize sexual assault. Panellists discussed how, on the other hand, social media can have a therapeutic role for survivors of violence, as it can be space to share experiences of pain and find a community that can reaffirm you. They shared that social media can be an important advocacy and awareness raising tool, and pointed to recent movements such as #MeToo, #NotInMyName and #MenAreTrash which have sparked discussion of these important issues online. NGOs have a role to play in interacting with these social media movements and opening them up to more marginalized women.

Two challenges that were highlighted during the discussion were holding social media companies accountable for providing platforms for gender-based violence, and the challenges around using social media communication as evidence in court in cases of violence.

Engaging Imams for Sustainable Gender Equity and the empowerment of women and girls

The side event “#ImamsForShe: Engaging Imams for Sustainable Gender Equity and the Empowerment of Women and Girls”, explored the potential of faith-based narratives, which are now more than ever relevant to the holistic achievement of all international standards regarding the human rights of women and girls, as well as to equitable and gender-
sensitive sustainable development. The session shared some promising examples across various regions of faith-based approaches to advance women’s rights and the feminist agenda. The panellists discussed the importance and opportunity to re-interpret religious scriptures from a feminist perspective and of gender justice activists being informed about these interpretations, in a way that can support finding common ground to engage with people of faith.