

MenEngage Alliance and North American MenEngage Network (NAMEN)'s Joint Response to accusations of harassment, misconduct and bullying by men within the field of engaging men and boys in gender equality

15 August 2018

It is with grave concern that we address two distinct cases of allegations of harassment, misconduct and bullying by two men, **Michael Kimmel, Professor of Sociology at the State University of New York at Stony Brook**, and **Ravi Karkara, Senior Advisor at UN Women**, who are considered longstanding leaders in the field of engaging men and boys in gender equality.

We acknowledge that the investigation into these cases is still in progress. However, while we await the outcomes of formal investigation processes, we believe silence and inaction is not an option. MenEngage Alliance takes a **survivor-centered approach** to such cases, which involves listening to and supporting survivors. We do not need to wait until someone has been formally charged or proven guilty in order to offer those who have come forward empathy and ally-ship.

While the specific allegations of these cases differ significantly, we agree that these cases share key underlying factors that have become all too familiar. Namely, **men in positions of power are alleged to have used and abused their influence to manipulate, coerce, bully and systematically subordinate others** - which includes deeply troubling reports of **sexual harassment and misconduct**. The nature of these allegations is all the more concerning because the two men who are implicated have been widely regarded as leading advocates and mentors to others in our field for many years. Their work includes collaborations with - and participation in - MenEngage Alliance activities¹. This response is therefore not only a call on those implicated but on the institutions they belong to – including our own.

As a **network founded on human rights and feminist principles**, MenEngage Alliance upholds its [core principles](#) and [code of conduct](#) and holds everyone affiliated with the Alliance, including our staff, network members and collaborating partners, to account by these standards. These include zero tolerance against violence; the prioritization of transparency and ethical standards; maximizing safety and wellbeing for all; and holding one another accountable. **These accusations represent a crucial test for us as an Alliance and the men and masculinities field in upholding these principles we have set for ourselves.**

MenEngage Alliance stands with those who have bravely come forward, including those that have remained anonymous, and acknowledge the courage it has taken them to speak openly about their experiences. Some of the suggested ways forward outlined in this response come from those affected by the cases, and we take responsibility through the platforms we have, to elevate their voices, from a **Do No Harm principle**.

This type of abuse is often able to happen and persist for such long periods of time, because of **underlying power dynamics**, and the significant influence some men hold in their institutions, over their peers,

¹ MenEngage Alliance has collaborated with Michael Kimmel and Stony Brook University in organizing various conferences and events, and he has contributed to MenEngage Alliance publications. He has since many years been considered a thought leader and mentor to many in this field of work. Ravi Karkara has been involved within MenEngage Alliance since its early days while he was working with various NGOs. As staff of UN Women, he worked on strategies to engage men and boys, and MenEngage Alliance collaborated with him in various UN events, including around youth participation.

coupled with a deep sense of (male) entitlement that overrides even the knowledge of what constitutes respectful and equitable relationships.

While we await the formal outcomes of the investigative processes, we **call on those involved to take the following actions:**

The accused

- We call on the accused men to listen to and acknowledge the experiences of the accusers, to respond and acknowledge their behaviors through transparent representation of the events, and, if the investigations into these cases find the accusations to be true, to take full responsibility for their actions.
- If those who have been harmed wish to seek restorative justice, we urge those accused to make amends and provide support in this process as appropriate.
- We also urge other men who are close to those accused to encourage and support them to remain accountable according to their professed pro-feminist values and commitments.

Individual men and the men and masculinities field

- We call on men, as a privileged constituency, to speak up and act when such cases of abuse and violence occur. It is expected of those men who consider themselves pro-feminist, to speak out and hold other men to account for any harmful acts.
- We emphasize that any such reflections and actions by and among men need to be done alongside the invaluable reflections and calls to action of women's rights, gender equality and feminist activists.
- This moment calls for serious introspection and action among men working in the gender equality field, on how our systems of accountability have failed, and ask ourselves what prevented us from realizing or acknowledging abuse was occurring in our field, and what prevented those who knew from speaking out.
- We call on MenEngage Alliance members and partners, as well as all men and boys who are part of the movements towards women's rights and gender justice, to strengthen our own systems of relational accountability and restorative justice. We must foster a space to support and challenge each other so that we can truly embody the core principles that we have set for ourselves and to hold each other to account.

The institutions involved

- We call on these institutions to assess their organizational practices in order to contribute to the prevention of future cases of harassment, misconduct, and bullying - including sexual - and to ensure they have proper systems and capacity to handle any future incidents in an adequate manner, assuring that due process for accuser and accused is institutionalized and strictly adhered to.
- We urge these institutions in their response to build on the expertise of feminist women's rights organizations on survivor-centered approaches to handling such cases.
- We remind these institutions that simply having policies and mechanisms is not enough, they must be used regularly and as part of wider efforts to transform institutional cultures, end impunity for perpetrators, and create safer workplace environments. This includes an examination of institutional structures and hierarchies, and patriarchal power dynamics which allow sexual misconduct and bullying to occur and prevent it from being reported.
- We commit to monitoring these cases closely to support accountable processes by State University of New York at Stony Brook and UN Women, in which the cases are handled adequately and appropriately, the necessary support is given to survivors and justice is delivered in a timely manner.

MenEngage Alliance

- As an Alliance, we must and will take this challenging moment to come together to strengthen our collective and individual accountable practices and amplify our efforts to eliminate all forms of violence and impunity, and dismantle patriarchy.
- We commit to continuing the process MenEngage Alliance has been undertaking in recent months, to develop comprehensive internal policies and mechanisms on preventing and responding to all types of violence and abuse – the importance and urgency of which is further underlined by these recent cases. We have come to the realization that despite one of our core principles being ‘zero tolerance against any form of sexual harassment, abuse and exploitation’, we need to strengthen internal policies and lay out proper standards, response and handling mechanisms to effectively prevent and respond to any cases should they occur.
- We urge all our members and organizations to conduct regular gender assessments and capacity development efforts, informed by feminist principles and expertise. The [Alliance’s Accountability Toolkit](#) can be a useful resource to carry out an inclusive, participatory reflection and develop and monitor action points with your colleagues on your organization or network’s institutional practices and culture.

MenEngage Alliance is willing to be of utmost support, within the limits of its expertise and capacity, to those who have been affected by these situations. We can offer a safe space for conversation and sharing, and jointly explore available support from other expert organizations or individuals based on specific needs. Please contact [us here](#).

Abhijit Das
Co-Chair
MenEngage Alliance /
Director, Center for Health
and Social Justice

Humberto Carolo
Co-Chair
MenEngage Alliance /
Executive Director,
White Ribbon Canada

Craig Norberg-Bohm
Co-Chair, North
American MenEngage
Network (NAMEN)

Joni van de Sand
Director
MenEngage Alliance,
Global Secretariat

THE ORIGINAL REPORTING ON THESE CASES

- ***“I Want to Hear Those Charges’: Noted Sociologist Defers Award Until He Can ‘Make Amends’”***, Katherine Mangan, 01 August 2018 <https://www.chronicle.com/article/I-Want-to-Hear-Those/244119> [this is not accessible public ally, needs paid subscription to access the article]
- ***“Eight Men have accused a senior UN Advisor of Sexual Misconduct, Sources say; Exclusive”*** Rory Laverty & James Laporta, 07 August 2018 <https://www.newsweek.com/senior-un-official-investigated-sexually-harassing-male-subordinates-1059209>

FURTHER REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

- ***“When profeminist men are alleged to have perpetrated abuse or harassment”***, Michael Flood, 08 August 2018 <http://xyonline.net/content/when-profeminist-men-are-alleged-have-perpetrated-abuse-or-harassment>
- ***“The Right Way to React If Someone Accuses You of Violating Their Consent”***, Brittney McNamara, 25 January 2018 <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/right-way-react-violate-consent>
- ***“What to Do When Someone You Know Has Been Accused of Sexual Harassment”***, Elizabeth Kiefer, 30 May 2018 <https://www.glamour.com/story/what-to-do-when-someone-you-know-is-accused-of-sexual-harassment>
- ***“What are the responsibilities of pro-feminist men in the Michael Kimmel case?”***, Robert Jensen, 06 August 2018 <https://www.feministcurrent.com/2018/08/06/responsibilities-pro-feminist-men-michael-kimmel-case/>
- ***“Reclaiming my fear: I will no longer stay silent about Michael Kimmel”***, Bethany M. Coston, 09 August 2018 <https://medium.com/@bmcoston/reclaiming-my-fear-i-will-no-longer-stay-silent-about-michael-kimmel-bde8602fee55>
- ***“How to respond if a friend is accused of sexual misconduct”***, Micheline Maynard, 27 March 2018, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-11-20/what-to-say-if-a-friend-is-accused-of-sexual-misconduct/9168782>
- ***“What We Need From Accused Perpetrators Like Michael Kimmel #metoosociology”***, Debra Guckenheimer, 03 August 2018 <https://medium.com/@debraguckenheimer/what-we-need-from-accused-perpetrators-like-michael-kimmel-metoosociology-979a8102547f>
- ***“Restoring Trust in the Feminist Sociology Community”***, Wendy M. Christensen, 06 August 2018 <https://medium.com/@wendyphd/restoring-trust-in-the-feminist-sociology-community-293e485c54a2>
- ***“UN must not lose funding over sexual harassment, alleged victim warns”***, Hannah Summers, 10 August 2018 <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2018/aug/10/un-must-not-lose-credibility-over-sexual-harassment-alleged-victim-steve-lee-ravi-karkara-un-women>
- ***“MenEngage Accountability Standards and Guidelines”***, MenEngage Global Alliance, 2018 http://menengage.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/MenEngage_Accountability-Standards-and-Guidelines.pdf
- ***“Practices and processes of accountability within the men for gender justice field: Synthesis of Discussions at the 2nd Global Symposium”***, Center for Health and Social Justice, November 2015 http://menengage.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Change-Begins-Within_practices-and-processes-of-accountability_Delhi-symposium.pdf