

Oral Intervention
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Changing social norms to achieve gender equality - expectations and opportunities
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I am speaking on behalf of MenEngage Global, an Alliance of more than 600 NGOs around the world.

These are some MenEngage key points, a result of a brainstorm by our caucus meetings last week. I am happy to know that many similar points have already been made by previous speakers.

We want to call your attention to:

1) The need to transform patriarchal norm-setting and negative forms of **masculinities**

- Because they have significant negative effects on **women's and children's** health, well-being, rights and opportunities.
- But also on those of **men and boys**.
- There is **pressure on men** to perform, be strong, dominate, to want sex all the time, to have a big car as demonstration of success, to be violent, to be strong, not to cry, not to show emotions, not to be close to their loved ones, etc.

2) The personal is political, and vice-versa:

- First of all, when it comes to women's bodies, health and rights – it is the **woman's choice** to have a partner or not, who that partner will be, and to want children or not - including the right to abortion as well as the right to continue a pregnancy.
- Men have to walk the talk in their private lives. There is a difference between what is said and what is lived at home. There is a need for **men to reflect on their own use of power and privilege** – even if they are pro-women's rights or feminist.
- Bystanders approach: you are complicit to the continuation of gender and other inequalities if you **don't speak up or take action** against gender injustices. Men also have to speak out against **anti- women's rights and anti-feminist men's groups**.
- Accountability of leaders – in many contexts they set and perpetuate norms. We still find mostly men in leadership positions. This is where the personal becomes political. By encouraging **reflection on how patriarchal norms affect their own lives, we can mobilize male leaders** to be agents of change for gender justice, including women's and girls' rights.
- Work from a **comprehensive, ecological model**: From individual awareness-raising, to community level, to supportive structures in institutions, to the policy level, including laws.

This brings us to:

3) Institutionalization, for example:

- Start as early as possible with **comprehensive education** in schools, including about sexuality, reproduction, human rights, gender, healthy relationships and communication skills.
- Create an enabling environment to balance work and private lives: for example the need for parental leave policies.

- **Transform extremely patriarchal work institutions**, such as police, military, professional sports, banking/financial institutions, etc.
- **Technologies** such as the Internet create or reinforce unacceptable social norms, discrimination and inequalities. Yet they also present a powerful opportunity to change social norms, if the rights messages are shared.
- **Addressing the gender dichotomy** reinforced by the private sector through its **marketing of products as “male” or “female”**. Examples are gender stereotype-reinforcing toys for children.

Some final points:

- We are worried by how the emphasis on “women” or “men” can reinforce the **gender binary**. There are greater differences among men and men, among women and women, than *between* men and women. We must take other power hierarchies into account based on **class, race, caste, sexual orientation and gender identity and expression**. We call for attention and respect to diversity and intersectionality.
- We need to **engage women** in changing social norms around **masculinities**. Patriarchal norms are perpetuated by women as well, for example by mothers. Women are agents of change in transforming boys’ and men’s socialization.
- Transforming age-old patriarchal norms is a slow process, and hence need **long-term interventions**.

Finally:

- There is a **growing movement** of men and women activists to positively engage boys and men towards gender justice, addressing negative masculinities and dismantling patriarchy, working in close cooperation with feminists and women's rights organisations.
- MenEngage looks forward to the future, including a post-2015 agenda that transforms patriarchal social norms.

Thank you.