



## **MenEngage Global Alliance and MenEngage Alliance South Asia's joint statement on allegations of misconduct and harassment against international leaders of the Alliance**

*7 January 2019*

We are concerned with the recent resurfacing of allegations of workplace misconduct and sexual harassment against Dr. Abhijit Das and Mr. Satish Kumar Singh, Director and Deputy Director respectively of Centre for Health and Social Justice (CHSJ) India. Abhijit Das is one of the Co-Chairs of MenEngage Global Alliance, and Satish Singh is a member of the Steering Committee of MenEngage Alliance South Asia (MEASA) and Convener of Forum to Engage Men (FEM), an affiliate network of the Alliance in India.

While we are awaiting more information and insights, we acknowledge that silence and inaction is not an option. As MenEngage Alliance we take the matter very seriously. This statement serves to acknowledge that the behaviors of two of our leaders have been questioned; to reaffirm our commitment to our principles and accountability standards; and to inform what we are doing accordingly.

### Background of the case based on available information

A former employee of CHSJ recently posted on her Facebook page about her negative experiences working with the organization, including allegations of sexual harassment and bullying. Citing specific instances and conversations from her time at CHSJ, the post was subsequently shared on the blog [Kractivist](#). The allegations pertain to her complaint dating back to 2014, which had been investigated and followed up internally by her then-employer CHSJ. The concluding report of the enquiry committee, instituted by CHSJ, recognized “tensions” within the organization, including “displays of temper” and “expressions of agitation” by the Director. The committee did not conclude that sexual harassment had taken place. The committee recommended a list of steps to respond to the complainant, and improve the organizational culture, the management practices and internal communication. However, in 2018 the complainant came forward again and it is our understanding that she was not satisfied with the inquiry process and did not accept the conclusions of the report.

The MenEngage Alliance leadership at the time kept itself informed, monitored the local process, and decided to accept the local committee's findings and recommendations. While we had considered the case resolved in 2014, emerging insights – including our increased attention for strengthening accountable practices and lessons from #MeToo on the comprehensive nature of sexual harassment and other forms of abuse - have led us to conclude that we need to reassess our response from 2014 and determine ways forward.

### Our commitments and ways forward:

As a network founded on human rights and feminist principles, MenEngage Alliance upholds our [core principles](#) and [code of conduct](#) and holds everyone affiliated with the Alliance to

account by these standards, including our staff, Board, network members, and collaborating partners. These include zero tolerance against violence and sexual harassment; a survivor-centered approach; the prioritization of transparency and ethical standards; maximizing safety and wellbeing for all; and holding one another accountable. Considering that Abhijit Das and Satish Singh are members of the Alliance and fulfil leadership roles, we recognize MenEngage Alliance has a role and responsibility to act. We are doing so in the following ways:

In light of the current situation, Abhijit Das has excused himself from his role as Co-Chair, membership of the Global Board, and any work related to MenEngage Alliance, until the matter is resolved. Satish Singh has also recused himself from his roles as member of the Steering Committee of MEASA and Convener of FEM.

After being informed by Abhijit Das about the case, MenEngage Alliance leadership has had conversations with him and others involved, and has reviewed documentation to better inform ourselves about the local context and situation. The Global Board convened to discuss its principles and responsibilities, and has formed a working group that will determine its scope of influence and roles in reviewing the handling of the case. The working group will outline ways forward including a clear time-frame for response from the Alliance; and issue recommendation to the Global Board, bearing in mind its mandate. In doing so it will test our policies and procedures, including the draft sexual harassment and misconduct policy, and identify ways to improve these. We commit to finalize and fully implement the policy. We furthermore commit to release the outcomes of the working group process publicly. The Steering Committee of MenEngage Alliance South Asia, following their internal discussion, has submitted its recommendations to the Global Board, which includes that an independent investigation be commissioned during the first quarter of 2019.

MenEngage Alliance leadership has had a conversation with the complainant to listen to and understand her views and expectations. We are also in contact with CHSJ leadership about how they are handling the case and dealing with the complaint. We are exploring with the parties involved what MenEngage Alliance's role can be in supporting a restorative justice process.

#### A moment of reflection and learning:

As this case and others highlight, it is of utmost importance – and we reaffirm our commitment – to self-reflect on the potential of sexual harassment and workplace misconduct occurring within our Alliance itself, as a global collective engaging men and boys in women's rights and gender justice. These situations require us to discuss, act diligently, and strengthen our accountability processes and practices. We humbly acknowledge that we do not have all the answers. We acknowledge that we as MenEngage Alliance are growing together with the MeToo and feminist movements. We strive to jointly explore answers to the questions that such cases bring to the surface. We are committed to extending our support, as appropriate, to our members and partners who experience or face allegations - so that they can respond in ethical and accountable ways.

As members of the Global Board, Global Secretariat and Regional Steering Committee, we will use this moment to deepen our commitment, work towards transforming our own cultures, and act in line with the values and principles we strive to uphold and promote throughout the network, while working towards the vision of women's rights and gender justice for all.

MenEngage Alliance Global Board  
MenEngage Alliance South Asia Steering Committee