

# Strategic Plan

**2021-2024**

**MenEngage Alliance**



**MenEngage Alliance**

working with men and boys for gender equality

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# Acronyms

AWID	Association for Women's Rights in Development
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CPD	United Nations Commission on Population and Development
CSO	Civil society organization
CSW	United Nations Commission on the Status of Women
GBV	Gender-based Violence
GS	MenEngage Global Secretariat
GTA	Gender transformative approaches
HRC	Human Rights Council
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
IMAGES	International Men and Gender Equality Survey
INGO	International non-governmental organization
IPPF	International Planned Parenthood Federation
KM&C	Knowledge Management and Communications
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, allied/asexual/aromantic/agender
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MRAs	Men's Rights Activists (commonly used term for anti-feminist men and men's groups)
MSM	Men who have sex with men
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PME&L	Planning, monitoring, evaluation & learning
SC	Steering Committee
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SOGIESC	Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics
SRHR	Sexual and reproductive health and rights
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNGASS	Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
UPR	Universal Periodic Review of the Human Right Council
VAW	Violence against women
WHO	World Health Organization
WILPF	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

# Introduction

This Strategic Plan of MenEngage Global Alliance for the period 2021-2024 has been put together through an extensive collaborative process among MenEngage leadership and partners. It is informed by the progress made during the last Strategic Plan for 2017-2020, including the work of the Regional Networks during that period and their emerging insights and needs; the findings from Evaluation of the 2017-2020 Strategic Plan, which included good response from members and partners; and a consultative Strategic planning process among the MenEngage Global Board and Secretariat team conducted in the period June-September 2020.

## About this Strategic Plan

Through this Strategic Plan, MenEngage Alliance is seeking to garner and better understand the political, economic, social and technological forces and factors that are confronting the world today, and therefore shape the contexts in which the work on transforming patriarchal masculinities and engaging men and boys for gender and social justice takes place. In the context analysis that follows, these forces and factors are briefly sketched, and their potential implications for the work of the Alliance discussed. It is intended to spark a critical reflection on the state of the world, the field, and our own work.

In doing so, we are not seeking to present all the answers of what needs to be done to address the significant problems that the world is facing. Rather, what the context analysis seeks to do is present the need for the work on transforming masculinities and engaging men and boys to be further sharpened and politicized, keeping the Alliance's mission and vision in mind as we seek to contribute to ending patriarchal power, protecting human rights and achieving gender equality and social justice. The context analysis, intervention logic and program for the coming years, intend to steer MenEngage Alliance in the direction of systems change and transformation of patriarchy as the end goal outlined by the feminist movements who we consider ourselves and this work accountable to.

Like almost everything we do, it is difficult to articulate issues of patriarchy, colonizing/decolonizing, social norms change and power. We recognize that these issues are not external to us, we are part of them. While it is challenging, since we have set ourselves to address these issues, we have to try and sit with them, discuss them, and seek answers to them.

With this in mind, we have developed this Strategic Plan and proposal to Sida that builds on MenEngage Alliance's previous strategic plans and learnings. These draw on the voices and expertise of the Alliance's membership and partners, including women's rights and social justice activists and organizations, and the Alliance's ambitious political agenda chartered by our mission and vision. It is furthermore informed by

the lessons from the international normative frameworks on the agenda of women's rights, gender equality, LGBTIQ+ rights and social justice, including that of the Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other global policy frameworks that support the realization of women's rights and gender justice within the broader context of social, economic and environmental justice and human rights.

The Strategic Plan consists of 3 sections:

- **Section 1** - Presents the Background and Context analysis to the Strategic Plan. It includes a selected analysis of the political, economic, social, technological and operational contexts that are confronting the world today, and their potential implications for the work of the Alliance. This section also includes a summary of the Evaluation findings and MenEngage's response; and Implications for the next phase.
- **Section 2** - The Intervention Logic, brings together our Vision, Mission and Guiding Commitments; with the Rationale for Alliance building and MenEngage's structure. It presents a summary of our Theory of Change – including *what* has to be changed (patriarchal masculinities and power), *who* are the agents of change (including diverse men and boys) and *how* we seek to achieve change. It summarizes our Strategies for Change as: *Link, Learn, Improve, and Influence*.
- **Section 3** - The Program for 2021-24, describes the goals, 4 Result Areas, strategies, and aspired outcomes and outputs of the MenEngage Global Alliance for the period 2021-24.

Given what we know, see and have available at this moment (October 2020), this direction is for the time being: we understand we may need to shift gears in the future again depending on many factors. Not in the least based on the insights that will be gathered with the community of practice of the Alliance itself, including through the MenEngage Ubuntu Symposium in 2020-2021.

## Overview of Strategic Planning Process

The strategic planning process was designed and led by consultant Alan Greig, in close collaboration with the Global Secretariat Co-Directors and the team from Singizi Consulting, who undertook the evaluation of the 2017-2020 Strategic Plan. Based on a review of relevant documentation produced by MenEngage Alliance, as well as academic and grey literature on gender transformative work with men and boys, a set of guiding themes and related questions were identified. These themes and questions were explored through in-depth interviews with external key informants, including activists and leaders from feminist and LGBTIQ+ movements, other social justice struggles, as well as donor representatives. Interviews were also conducted with representatives from each of the regional networks of MenEngage Alliance, Board members and the staff of the Global Secretariat.

Issues and questions arising from these interviews, together with emerging findings from the evaluation, were used to guide the design of an online strategic planning workshop for Board members and Global Secretariat staff. Held over four two-hour sessions, the workshop focused its first two sessions on reviewing the findings from the evaluation and their implications for the strategic plan, discussing a situation assessment of opportunities and threats facing gender transformative work with men and boys, and reflecting on the challenges facing the Alliance in terms of its internal dynamics of power. This

conversation on internal dynamics centered on the question of what it will take to decolonize MenEngage Alliance's practice in order for its work on gender justice with men and boys to be truly transformative.

With these foundations established, the final two sessions of the online strategic planning workshop discussed directions and priorities for the work of MenEngage Alliance, in view of evaluation findings and in response to the opportunities and threats already identified. These priorities are organized as a set of Result Areas, and respective Outcomes, based on an intervention logic grounded in the MenEngage Alliance theory of change. This Strategic Plan is based on the conclusions and recommendations from the strategic planning workshop, and was drafted by the Global Secretariat staff together with the strategic planning consultant.

## SECTION 1

# Background and Context

## 1.1 Context Analysis

### The need for systemic change

In the 25 years since the UN Fourth World Conference on Women, an unprecedented mobilization across feminist civil society, national governments and multi-lateral institutions has ensured that the injustices of gender inequalities have become a central focus of work on human rights and sustainable development. Yet, feminist activists from social movements across the world are highlighting the extent to which progress made since the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action is now being threatened, and in some cases reversed. Some of these threats were highlighted at the 2nd MenEngage Global Symposium in 2014. As the background paper prepared for the symposium observed:<sup>1</sup>

*[C]onservative discourses, state-supported in some countries, of a hyper-masculine national identity promote traditional patriarchal roles as a project of nation-building, thereby dangerously conflating patriarchy, patriotism, culture and national sovereignty into a political discourse and positioning progress toward women's empowerment and gender equality as disruptive of a national order.*

At a 2019 feminist convening in Mexico City to prepare for the Beijing+25 Generation Equality Forum, this threat of resurgent patriarchy was made clear, in the following terms: "While we have seen achievements in the twenty-five years since, we have also witnessed backlash against those gains and the consolidation of power imbalances and structures underlying women's oppression, with dire results."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ricardo, Christine. 2014. "Men, Masculinities, and Changing Power: A Discussion Paper on Engaging Men in Gender Equality from Beijing 1995 to 2015." MenEngage Alliance, and UN Women and UNFPA. p45

<sup>2</sup> Anon. 2019. "Women Radically Transforming a World in Crisis: A Framework for Beijing+25 Shaped at a Strategy Meeting of Feminist Activists." Mexico City, Mexico. p1



The forces ranged against progressive efforts to address gender injustice are formidable. Activists at the Mexico City feminist convening identified a “nexus of religious groups, political elites, the private sector, entrepreneurs, religious educational institutions, movements, militants, and other diverse actors using religious idiom to advance anti-democratic, misogynist political agendas.” This nexus is “increasingly dominating the public narrative and decision-making spaces, providing both monetary and intellectual resources across borders for the advancement of their shared agenda.”<sup>3</sup> The Women’s Rights Caucus, a global coalition of over 200 organizations working to advance women’s human rights, in their *Feminist declaration on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women*, similarly expresses “grave concern at the rise of authoritarianism, fascism, nationalism, xenophobia, supremacist ideologies, and fundamentalism worldwide.” In particular, the Women’s Rights Caucus emphasizes that the “neoliberal economic order is a key structural barrier that since 1995 has exacerbated inequalities within and between countries and among genders.” The declaration makes clear:<sup>4</sup>

*That patriarchy and other systems of oppression reinforce this economic system, which has allowed a small number of wealthy individuals to gain more power, has compromised democratic systems of governance worldwide and allowed authoritarian, fascist and populist figures to thrive.*

This naming of the structural obstacles to realizing gender justice and women’s human rights is a necessary step in seizing the political opportunity presented by the Beijing+25 Generation Equality Forum to develop and implement a radical agenda for fundamental changes in these interlocking “systems of oppression”. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the urgency of this agenda has been further highlighted, even as the opportunity appears threatened by the scale and severity of the public health emergency, and its derailing of political priorities, including the Generation Equality Forum itself.

Maintaining momentum for pushing forwards the feminist visions of radical systems change outlined by the Women’s Rights Caucus and the Mexico City convening will not be easy in the midst of COVID-19. Its devastating economic impacts will weaken the ability of national governments and intergovernmental bodies to make the necessary financial investments to transition to an equitable and sustainable economic order, that prioritizes the needs of people and the planet over the power and profits of transnational corporations and elites. The forces threatening progress on women’s human rights and gender justice more broadly are, in many ways, being intensified by COVID-19 and reactions to it: a rise in xenophobic nationalism, the repression of political dissent, the undermining of multi-lateral institutions and an ever-greater concentration of power in the hands of wealthy elites and the world’s richest corporations. At the level of the household, the pandemic has exposed and exacerbated patriarchal dynamics, with a documented surge in cases of men’s violence against women and children, and an increase in the burden of care work borne by women and girls.<sup>5</sup>

Given this, it is easy to lose sight of the progress that has been made, on which movements for gender justice must build. The Women’s Rights Caucus reminds us that the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action has been a “crucial tool for feminist movements to drive transformative change, from creating gender machinery, to changing discriminatory laws and policies, building political will and accountability

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p1

<sup>4</sup> Women’s Rights Caucus. 2019. “Feminist Declaration on the Occasion of the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women.” Women’s Rights Caucus. p1

<sup>5</sup> UN Women. 2020. “COVID-19 and Ending Violence against Women and Girls.” New York, NY: UN Women.

frameworks, and to shifting global conversations.”<sup>6</sup> But the Caucus is also clear that this incremental reform over the last 25 years must not be held back by “lack of courageous actions”; indeed, a transformative step-change in organizing and legislating for gender justice is required in the face of “actions of regressive groups who reinforce patriarchy, nationalism, fundamentalism, authoritarianism, and capitalism.”<sup>7</sup> In the words of the Mexico City feminist convening, “we seek a radical transformation of a world in crisis, putting women, people, and the planet over profit.”<sup>8</sup> The Women’s Rights Caucus is also clear that this agenda for radical transformation involves recognizing “the importance of transforming patriarchal masculinities and dismantling stereotypical social norms for the elimination of gender-based violence and discrimination” and committing “to the full engagement of men and boys for the achievement of gender equality, and to have them take responsibility and be held accountable for their behavior by understanding and addressing the root causes of gender inequality [...]”<sup>9</sup>

### **Gender justice work with men and boys**

That progress toward women’s rights and gender justice would be enhanced by specific efforts to work with men and boys was highlighted in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action. This international commitment was built on two decades or more of work by women’s rights organizations with men and boys on issues such as domestic violence, parenting and care work, and sexual and reproductive health and rights. One of the incremental changes over the last 25 years that has accompanied and contributed to the progress described above has been the growth of gender justice work targeting men and boys. The emergence and expansion of the MenEngage Alliance itself is an indicator of this growth.

In global norm-setting and policy-making spaces, there has been a steady uptake of language on engaging men and boys towards advancing women’s and girls’ human rights and fundamental freedoms. The CEDAW Convention and General Recommendations emphasize the need to address the root causes of gender inequalities, including references to the needs to engage men and boys in gender equality more broadly.<sup>10</sup> The UN Human Rights Council promotes the engagement of men and boys as allies in a range of key issues related to gender equality, including all forms of violence against women and girls, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and unpaid care work.<sup>11</sup> The Agreed Conclusions of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) have, on several occasions, highlighted the importance of male-focused gender transformative work, notably at CSW48 in 2004, whose theme included “The role of men and boys in achieving gender equality”.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, UN Security Council

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<sup>6</sup> Women’s Rights Caucus. 2019. para 7. The declaration highlights the progress that has been made in the “recognition of gender-based violence as a matter of national and international importance”, the passage of laws in more than fifty countries increasing access to abortion, the adoption of ILO Conventions on the rights of Domestic Workers and Eliminating Violence and Harassment in the World of Work, the reform of laws that have increased women’s and girls’ access, ownership, use and control of land and natural resources, and the passage of laws recognizing same-sex relationships, the enactment of legal gender recognition laws based on self-determination, and the decriminalization of same-sex intimacy in some countries.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. para 36

<sup>8</sup> Anon. 2019. p2

<sup>9</sup> Women’s Rights Caucus. 2019. para 34

<sup>10</sup> UN General Assembly, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, 18 December 1979, United Nations

<sup>11</sup> UN Human Rights Council Resolution 35/10, Accelerating efforts to eliminate violence against women: engaging men and boys in preventing and responding to violence against all women and girls, June 2017

<sup>12</sup> In addition: CSW58 addressed the roles of men and boys in sharing household responsibilities and taking equal responsibility in matters of sexuality and reproduction as well as HIV/AIDS prevention; CSW60 highlighted the benefits of a more equal

Resolutions on the Women, Peace and Security agenda have emphasized the need to address the militarized masculinities that help fuel both conflict and military spending, and to target work with men and boys on issues such as disarmament and demobilization and their own experiences of conflict-related sexual violence.<sup>13</sup>

As the Evaluation of our 2017-2020 Strategic Plan makes clear, MenEngage Alliance played a role, in collaboration and solidarity with feminist advocates and women's rights organizations, in advocating for these policy statements on the roles of men and boys. An important emphasis of this collaborative advocacy has been to insist that initiatives to engage men and boys are done in an accountable manner, and in support of gender justice work with women and girls. At the same time, MenEngage Alliance has provided a platform for member organizations to share with and learn from each other in improving their work with men and boys on issues such as SRHR, fatherhood and GBV prevention. In support of this Community of Practice among members, MenEngage Alliance has developed a range of technical resources, as well as Accountability Standards and Guidelines and an Accountability Training Toolkit, which guide efforts across the membership towards full accountability in programmatic, advocacy and partnership efforts with women's rights organizations.<sup>14</sup>

In recent years, evaluations and evidence reviews of gender justice work with men and boys have highlighted both its potential for gender transformative impact and its current limitations. One of the largest of such reviews, the *Engendering Men: Evidence on Routes to Gender Equality* (EMERGE) project, concluded that:<sup>15</sup>

*strategies with men and boys shown to be effective at the individual and community level in changing gender attitudes and behaviors include a combination of peer education, using male advocates, large-scale media programs, workplace programs and community/rights-based programming that aim to reduce gender inequality by working to change social norms.*

This emphasis on "changing gender attitudes and behaviors" has, however, been critiqued by many both within and outside the field of gender justice work with men and boys as paying insufficient attention to strategies for the kinds of systemic changes discussed earlier. This critique is discussed in more detail in Section 1.2.5. For now, it is important to note that this concern about a lack of focus on structural barriers to gender justice is linked to a concern that work with men and boys, as it has expanded over the last 25 years, has too often been too separate from gender justice work with women and girls and LGBTQIA+ communities. In its insistence on the need for "transforming patriarchal masculinities", the Women's Rights Caucus also makes clear the need to ensure that "all efforts to transform masculinities and engage men and boys are firmly rooted in feminist-informed, gender-transformative and human rights-based

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society for men, women and children and emphasized the need to engage men in caregiving and domestic work, and to transform social norms that condone violence.

<sup>13</sup> Duriesmith, David. 2017. "Engaging Men and Boys in the Women, Peace and Security Agenda: Beyond the "Good Men" Industry." LSE Women, Peace and Security Working Paper Series. London: London School of Economics.

<sup>14</sup> See <http://menengage.org/accountability/>

<sup>15</sup> Edström, Jerker, Alexa Hassink, Thea Shahrokh and Erin Stern. 2015. "Engendering Men: A Collaborative Review of Evidence on Men and Boys in Social Change and Gender Equality." EMERGE Evidence Review. Promundo-US, Sonke Gender Justice and the Institute of Development Studies. p18

approaches that are fully accountable to feminist, women's rights, activists, organizations and movements.”<sup>16</sup>

### **Toward a better understanding of gender transformative work with men and boys**

What it means to do “feminist-informed, gender-transformative” work with men and boys remains the key question facing the members of MenEngage Alliance, and our constituent networks, Global Secretariat and Board. In MenEngage’s 2018 submission to the CEDAW Committee on *Engaging Men and Boys and Transforming Masculinities for the Realization of CEDAW’s Mandates*, the Alliance noted many of the concerns surrounding our field of work. These included the use of approaches that reinforce male domination; emphasis on men as victims of patriarchy; insufficient recognition of women’s rights movements’ work; unbalanced attention, visibility and access of those actively working with men and boys; competition for limited resources; and inequalities between small- and large-scale organizing and activities.<sup>17</sup>

The Evaluation of our 2017-2020 Strategic Plan makes clear the extent to which the work of the MenEngage Alliance over the last four years has addressed these concerns. In addition to the work on accountability issues already mentioned, the Alliance has worked with its membership to develop a shared understanding that:<sup>18</sup>

*Gender transformative approaches with men and boys are those that go beyond merely ‘engaging men and boys’ or educating or raising awareness of men and boys on a particular issue, and seek to create a fundamental shift in attitudes and behaviors related to masculinity and what it means to be a man within a particular society or context.*

In our Theory of Change, developed in 2018, we structure our analysis of gender transformative approaches using a socio-ecological model of change. This model emphasizes the need to work not only at the individual and community levels, but also with “interventions that aim to embed positive gender norms into institutions; and through the promotion of government policies and laws that engage men and boys in violence prevention and response.”<sup>19</sup> In turn, the emphasis on accountability within the Theory of Change extends beyond holding individual men to account for their patriarchal behavior, to include holding to account institutions across all sectors, national governments and the international community for their respective roles and responsibilities in transforming patriarchal masculinities.

Yet, even two years later, this framework for gender transformative work with men and boys on patriarchal masculinities appears in need of updating. The socio-ecological model of change, with its discreet levels and understanding of society in primarily national terms, struggles to account for the transnational, intersectional forces of oppression identified by feminist movements as the primary target of change. These forces are not confined to the ‘nation’; they are shaped by histories of imperialism and colonialism and realities of neo-colonial relations between the global North and South, structured as they

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<sup>16</sup> Women’s Rights Caucus. 2019. para 34

<sup>17</sup> MenEngage. 2018. "Briefing Note: Engaging Men and Boys and Transforming Masculinities for the Realization of Cedaw’s Mandates." Washington, DC: MenEngage Alliance Global Secretariat.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. p15

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p15

are by neoliberal capitalism and contemporary geopolitics. The African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET) makes clear that:<sup>20</sup>

*it is the interests and needs of dominant groups (notably heterosexual, able-bodied and educated white men) that inform and drive our current world order. Long and complex histories of colonisation, interacting with dominant group interests in national contexts, exacerbate how decisions in the Global North impact the Global South.*

The Women's Major Group, which facilitates women's civil society input into the policy space provided by the United Nations, highlights the need to question "the political and economic systems that prioritize competition over cooperation, exploitation over conservation, and profit over co-existence" because "[i]n order to create change, you have to understand power and how it operates."<sup>21</sup> From this perspective, patriarchy is necessarily intersectional in its operations. As the Women's Rights Caucus emphasizes:<sup>22</sup>

*patriarchy, heteronormativity, cisgenderism, ableism, classism, racism, casteism, religious discrimination, corporate power, capitalism, militarism, imperialism and neocolonialism, reinforce one another and entrench structural barriers to equality, with negative implications on the lives of women and girls in all their diversity and their ability to exercise and enjoy their human rights and fundamental freedoms.*

At the same time, the focus on the accountability of sectoral institutions, national governments and indeed the international community must take account of the political and economic forces constraining their operations. The Mexico City feminist convening in preparation for the Beijing+25 Generation Equality Forum is clear-sighted in this regard. It insists that the "critical challenge facing the world today is the corporate capture of the state and multilateral spaces like the UN."<sup>23</sup> As a result:<sup>24</sup>

*private interests have increasingly come to dominate public and collective ones, creating a feedback loop in which private interests use their influence on governance to erode public resources (e.g. through right-wing regimes and neoliberal fiscal policy) creating justification for private collaboration, and also diminishing the capacity of states to regulate this same private sector nationally and extraterritorially, which solidifies corporate control and threatens due diligence, accountability, and human rights compliance.*

In developing our new Strategic Plan, MenEngage Alliance is seeking to better understand these political, economic, social and technological forces and factors that are shaping and confronting the work with men and boys on transforming patriarchal masculinities. In the sections that follow, these forces and factors are briefly sketched, and their potential implications for the work of the Alliance discussed.

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<sup>20</sup> FEMNET. 2020. "The Audacity to Disrupt: An Introduction to Feminist Macro-Level Economics." Nairobi, Kenya: The African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET). p5

<sup>21</sup> Women's Major Group. 2020. "Accelerated Action and Transformative Pathways: Realizing the Decade of Action and Delivery for Sustainable Development." 2020 High Level Political Forum Position Paper. p5

<sup>22</sup> Women's Rights Caucus. 2019. p1

<sup>23</sup> Anon. 2019. "Women Radically Transforming a World in Crisis: A Framework for Beijing+25 Shaped at a Strategy Meeting of Feminist Activists." Mexico City, Mexico. p6

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. p6

### 1.1.1 Political contexts

#### **Authoritarian politics and family values**

Women's exclusion from political life has long been central to patriarchy. The private/public distinction, confining women and girls to the feminized space of the home and masculinizing the public domain of political life, has operated for centuries in many societies; it continues to this day. While women and men now vote in elections at similar rates, 76 percent of parliamentary seats are still held by men, and women represent only five percent of heads of government in 2019, lower today than even five years ago.<sup>25</sup> Recent years have even seen a troubling rise in reports of assault, intimidation, and abuse directed at female politicians.<sup>26</sup> Politics is still seen as men's business. The disproportionate burden of responsibility that women continue to bear for 'domestic' work in the home, the labor of cooking, cleaning and caring, not only limits the time that women have to participate in political life. Patriarchal norms, associating femininity with the domestic sphere, portray women's 'caring instincts' as being ill-suited to political life.

Feminist progress in rejecting these norms and demanding political rights and power for women is increasingly being met with patriarchal backlash, evident in the rise to power of openly misogynistic authoritarian 'strong-men' in a number of countries. The successful electoral campaigns of Presidents Duterte (elected to office in the Philippines on June 30, 2016), Trump (formally appointed by the Electoral College on December 19, 2016) and Bolsonaro (elected to office in Brazil on October 28, 2018) were all disfigured by openly misogynist, homophobic and transphobic public statements and, in some cases, policy proposals. Elected to his second term as Hungary's Prime Minister in 2010, Viktor Orbán took the extraordinary step in October 2018 of revoking accreditation and funding to universities offering gender studies programs. In doing so, the Orbán administration insisted that the "Government's standpoint is that people are born either male or female... and we do not consider it acceptable for us to talk about socially-constructed genders, rather than biological sexes."<sup>27</sup> The last five years, then, have witnessed a significant regression in political discourse and public speech on issues of gender and sexuality in a number of countries, raising questions about the degree to which such political developments are the cause or consequence of a resurgent gender conservatism in such societies.

Associated with these developments is a resurgent politics of conservative "family values", organized around a patriarchal binary of masculine authority and feminine domesticity. Anti-feminism is fundamental to this growing authoritarianism. Feminist leaders and activists at a 2019 convening in Mexico City, preparing for the Beijing+25 Generation Equality Forum, emphasized that "authoritarian power is inevitably exercised by targeting women and gender-non conforming people through the regulation of their bodies, roles, freedoms, and rights."<sup>28</sup> Central to this regulation is the vision of a social

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<sup>25</sup> UNDP. 2020. "Tackling Social Norms: A Game Changer for Gender Inequalities." 2020 Human Development Perspectives. New York: United Nations Development Programme.

<sup>26</sup> Krook, Mona Lena and Juliana Restrepo Sanín. 2019. "The Cost of Doing Politics? Analyzing Violence and Harassment against Female Politicians." *Perspectives on Politics*:1-16.

<sup>27</sup> Kent, Lauren and Samantha Tapfumaneyi. 2018. "Hungary's Pm Bans Gender Study at Colleges Saying 'People Are Born Either Male or Female'." *CNN*. Retrieved: August 5, 2020 (<https://www.cnn.com/2018/10/19/europe/hungary-bans-gender-study-at-colleges-trnd/index.html>).

<sup>28</sup> Anon. 2019. "Women Radically Transforming a World in Crisis: A Framework for Beijing+25 Shaped at a Strategy Meeting of Feminist Activists." Mexico City, Mexico. p4

order based on the patriarchal, heteronormative family, to which feminism and activism on SOGIESC<sup>29</sup> rights pose a threat. This anti-feminist politics of 'traditional' family values is evident in the increased efforts to roll back progressive legislation on sexual and reproductive health and rights in a number of countries, accompanied by increased political attacks on organizations working for SOGIESC rights and women's rights.<sup>30</sup> In this politics, the authoritarian 'strong-man' embodies, as head of the 'national family', a restoration of the 'natural' social order and its 'traditional' family values.

This ideology of traditional family values is usually associated with conservative, right-wing, and far-right political parties and formations. But scholarly work is revealing the extent to which such family values have been at the heart of neoliberal political visions and economic reforms. These visions and reforms have been driven by the conviction that, in the famous words of UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, "there's no such thing as society. There are individual men and women and there are families."<sup>31</sup> As Brown suggests, "society [...] is precisely what neoliberalism set out to destroy conceptually, normatively, and practically."<sup>32</sup> It did so by "[e]ntrepreneurializing and responsabilizing the subject and retasking families with shouldering everything previously provided by the social state (from the cost of education to the cost of dependent young, old, and infirm)."<sup>33</sup> This means that "[e]thically, dismantling society involves challenging social justice with the natural authority of traditional values."<sup>34</sup> This constriction of the "social" continues to have profound political effects:<sup>35</sup>

*The neoliberal attack on the social is key to generating an anti-democratic culture from below while building and legitimating anti-democratic forms of state power from above. The synergy between them means that an increasingly anti-democratic citizenry is ever more willing to authorize an anti-democratic state.*

From the imposition of structural adjustment programs on the "global South" from the 1980s onwards to the welfare reforms across the "global North" from the 1990s onwards, this "neoliberal attack on the social" has undermined the idea that the State has a responsibility to maintain and enhance society, instead restricting its roles to that of ensuring law and order and the smooth functioning of the economy.

Ideas about and representations of masculinities have been bound up in complicated ways with neoliberalism's family values and their diminution of society. On the one hand, the privatization of the State's social responsibilities centered public policy attention on the family and its functioning, especially in contexts where the promotion of women's individual economic empowerment had become an important aspect of neoliberal reform.<sup>36</sup> Accompanying structural adjustment and welfare reform was an

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<sup>29</sup> Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression and Sex Characteristics

<sup>30</sup> Corrêa, Sonia. 2017. "Gender Ideology: Tracking Its Origins and Meanings in Current Gender Politics." LSE Engenderings Blog. Retrieved: September 6, 2020 (<https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/gender/2017/12/11/gender-ideology-tracking-its-origins-and-meanings-in-current-gender-politics/>).

<sup>31</sup> See <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/apr/08/margaret-thatcher-quotes>

<sup>32</sup> Brown, Wendy. 2020. "Neoliberalism's Scorpion Tail." Pp. 39-60 in *Mutant Neoliberalism: Market Rule and Political Rupture*, edited by W. Callison and Z. Manfredi. New York: Fordham University Press. p44

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. p45

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. p45

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. p46

<sup>36</sup> Cornwall, Andrea. 2016. "Introduction: Masculinities under Neoliberalism." Pp. 1-28 in *Masculinities under Neoliberalism*, edited by A. Cornwall, F. G. Karioris and N. Lindisfarne. London: Zed Books.

increasing emphasis on the policy problem of “irresponsible fatherhood”. Efforts to get poor women into waged work “led poor men to become hyper-visible as irresponsible partners, and as the crux of the gender policy problem.”<sup>37</sup> The growth of “responsible fatherhood” programming from the 1990s onwards should thus be understood in relation to neoliberalism’s family values and so too, “the risk that their interventions are complicit in the neo-liberal retreat from social provisioning.”<sup>38</sup>

On the other hand, neoliberalism’s “attack on the social” has helped create a democratic void in many countries, hollowing out political parties and processes and reducing them to the technocratic functions of economic management. The 2008 recession threw this model of technocratic governance into crisis, and into the political void has stepped a range of anti-democratic, authoritarian leaders and forces, whose claim to restore order looks to the ‘natural’ hierarchy of the patriarchal family and the protector role of its father figure as the basis of their legitimacy. Efforts to push back against this patriarchal authoritarianism, with women often in the forefront of democratic struggles, as in the case of Belarus most recently, have been met with increased State violence.

Several months into the COVID-19 pandemic, and the signs are that policy responses are exacerbating rather than addressing the political dynamics discussed above. The failure of many governments to fulfill the state-society ‘social’ contract of prioritizing the health and welfare of their citizens attests to the ideological success and institutional effects of the “neoliberal attack on the social”. Indeed, there is evidence that many states are using the pandemic as an opportunity to heighten their surveillance and suppression of social protest and political dissent.<sup>39</sup> The “shadow epidemic” of domestic violence resulting from the patriarchal anger and anxiety associated with lockdown measures is echoed by the masculinist ethos of national security approaches to public health, prioritizing border protection and xenophobic social control.<sup>40</sup> The capacity of women’s rights organizations and coalitions to confront this authoritarianism in political life has also been weakened with intensified State-led efforts to restrict and police civil society space in many countries.<sup>41</sup> As the feminist activists at the Mexico City convening in 2019 made clear, “[a]uthoritarian regimes rely on fear-based politics; tapping into the collective desire for ‘order and control’, they utilize ‘law and order’ politics to justify the criminalization of threats to the prevailing social, political, and economic order.”<sup>42</sup>

## **Rising ethnonationalism**

The ways in which masculinities are implicated in this “collective desire for ‘order and control’” merit closer examination. The reliance of authoritarian politics on a model of social order based on the ‘natural’

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<sup>37</sup> Bedford, Kate 2007. “The Imperative of Male Inclusion: How Institutional Context Influences World Bank Gender Policy.” *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 9(3):289–311. p289

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* p303

<sup>39</sup> Cooper, Luke and Guy Aitchison. 2020. “The Dangers Ahead: Covid-19, Authoritarianism and Democracy.” London, UK: LSE Conflict and Civil Society Research Unit, London School of Economics.

<sup>40</sup> Rees, Madeleine and Christine Chinkin. 2020. “Covid-19: Our Response Must Match the Male Leaders’ War on the Pandemic.” Retrieved: June 6, 2020 (<https://www.wilpf.org/covid-19-a-response-to-match-the-male-leaders-war-on-the-pandemic/>).

<sup>41</sup> Hossain, Naomi, Nalini Khurana, Shandana Mohmand, Sohela Nazneen, Marjoke Oosterom, Tony Roberts, Ricardo Santos, Alex Shankland and Patrick Schröder. 2018. “What Does Closing Civic Space Mean for Development? A Literature Review and Proposed Conceptual Framework.” IDS Working Paper No. 515. Brighton: Institute of Development Studies.

<sup>42</sup> Anon. 2019. p5



hierarchy and presumed stability of the heteronormative family explains the prominence given to countering what conservative and far-right forces term “gender ideology”. Such forces frequently depict feminists and LGBTQIA+ activists as among the most dangerous threats to the social order because they challenge the patriarchal authority embedded in the heteronormative family. As was explained at the 2019 Mexico City convening:<sup>43</sup>

*A term increasingly used towards this end is “gender ideology,” which conservative groups in Latin America and Europe in particular have used to project distorted and fabricated versions of demands made by feminists and LGBTI communities, attack the advancement of women's human rights and autonomy, and strengthen heteronormative ideas around sexuality and gender.*

At the same time, the metaphor of the nation as family has been commonly used in the rise of an ethnonationalist politics in many parts of the world. Those who are deemed not to belong to the national ‘family’ are framed as threats to the social order. Such ‘outsiders’, whether indigenous or minority communities, immigrants or refugees, are depicted as wholly Other; in other words, they are racialized as being culturally incompatible with and inferior to those who ‘naturally’ belong to the nation. Images of and ideas about masculinity are used frequently in this racialization. Narratives and representations of racialized masculinities have a long and widespread history, from white supremacists stoking fears of the figure of the black male rapist in the USA to the use made by Hindu nationalists of propaganda about the dangers of Muslim male sexuality in India.<sup>44</sup> Over recent years, far-right parties in Europe have fueled anti-immigrant sentiments among the White/majority population by provoking moral panics about the alleged dangers of immigration, in which the figure of the sexually violent male immigrant looms large.<sup>45</sup> Far-right propaganda claiming that the White/majority population is under demographic threat from a rapidly growing immigrant population, the so-called Great Replacement narrative, also relies on stories about immigrant male sexuality, portrayed as primitive and unrestrained, which is said to account for the greater size of immigrant families.<sup>46</sup>

These and many other examples make clear how often racist ideologies and political formations define the threat of the “Other” in terms of masculinities which are racialized as barbarous, uncivilized, primitive. Such racialized interpretations and understanding of masculinities are put to ideological work by ethnonationalist parties and forces in calling on the White/majority population to defend ‘their’ women, families and by extension, nation, from this threat posed by the male Other. Appeals to the protector role of the White/majority male features prominently in such appeals, from protecting ‘their’ women to protecting the nation’s borders from the male Other’s sexuality and violence. From Finland to the USA, scholars have highlighted the ways in which such protection is framed in terms of White/majority “borderguard masculinities”.<sup>47</sup> In some Western European countries where significant progress in gender equality has been made, at the formal level of law and policy at least, this threat of the ‘primitive’ male

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid. p4

<sup>44</sup> Vanaik, Achin. 2018. "India's Two Hegemonies." *New Left Review* 112(July-August):29-59.

<sup>45</sup> Scrinzi, Francesca. 2017. "A 'New' National Front? Gender, Religion, Secularism and the French Populist Radical Right." Pp. 127-40 in *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*, edited by M. Köttig, R. Bitzan and A. Petö.

<sup>46</sup> Davey, Jacob and Julia Ebner. 2019. "'The Great Replacement': The Violent Consequences of Mainstreamed Extremism." London: Institute for Strategic Dialogue.

<sup>47</sup> Keskinen, Suvi. 2013. "Anti-Feminism and White Identity Politics: Political Antagonisms in Radical Rightwing Populist and Anti-Immigration Rhetoric in Finland." *Nordic Journal of Migration Research* 3(4):225–32.

Other is also portrayed as a threat to the 'civilized' progress in gender relations made by the 'West', racialized as White.<sup>48</sup>

### **Pervasive militarism**

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are being seen, too, in an intensified nationalism, with anxieties about borders, migrants and globalized supply chains to the fore. "Take back control", the meme of the implicitly ethnonationalist Brexit campaign in the UK, now has a much wider currency, thanks to the pandemic. Feminist activists and scholars continue to note the ways in which this nationalist rhetoric of control and protection is both masculinized and militarized; nationalism, militarism and patriarchal masculinities have always been closely linked.<sup>49</sup> A recent article by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom makes these links clear. Rees and Chinkin note that "[m]ilitarism is always the default position. We have had the 'war on drugs', the 'war on terror' and now the war on a virus."<sup>50</sup> As they continue:<sup>51</sup>

*This militarism is dependent on the elevation of a particular construction of masculinity which necessitates a binary notion of gender. It is dangerous; war requires loyalty, deepens gendered divisions and sets in place a framework which, even before the curve is flattened, establishes what the post-pandemic priorities will be, unless alternatives become established policy now.*

In this way, COVID-19 provides yet another reminder of how deeply fused are militarism and patriarchal masculinity. Military weapons and military involvement have long been ways for men to prove 'their' masculinity. As the Women Peacemakers Program has observed, "there is a strong correlation between carrying guns and notions of masculinity. Inside and outside of armed conflict, the so-called gun culture is overwhelmingly associated with cultural norms of masculinity, including men and boys as protectors and as warriors."<sup>52</sup> At the same time, military institutions rely on images and narratives of patriarchal masculinity for their recruitment and internal 'culture'. Geuskens notes that:<sup>53</sup>

*The military uses images of masculinity to draw boys and men to the military. Even though in many countries the military has opened up for women and queer people, it still strongly relies on images of masculinities. These images are based on a readiness to use violence and highlight the importance of physical strength.*

Studies of non-state terrorist groups also highlight their use of memes of emasculation, virility and protection in their recruitment messaging,<sup>54</sup> and the violent misogyny which often infuses their political

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<sup>48</sup> Scrinzi. 2017.

<sup>49</sup> Goldstein, Joshua S. 2001. *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>50</sup> Rees, Madeleine and Christine Chinkin. 2020. "Covid-19: Our Response Must Match the Male Leaders' War on the Pandemic." Retrieved: June 6, 2020 (<https://www.wilpf.org/covid-19-a-response-to-match-the-male-leaders-war-on-the-pandemic/>).

<sup>51</sup> Ibid

<sup>52</sup> Geuskens, Isabelle, Merle Gosewinkel and Sophie Schellens. 2014. "Gender and Militarism: Analyzing the Links to Strategize for Peace." Women Peacemakers Program. p15

<sup>53</sup> Geuskens, Isabelle. 2014. "Gender and Militarism: Policy Brief." The Hague, Netherlands: Women Peacemakers Program. p5

<sup>54</sup> Messerschmidt, James W. and Achim Rohde. 2018. "Osama Bin Laden and His Jihadist Global Hegemonic Masculinity." *Gender & Society* 32(5):663-85.

ideology.<sup>55</sup> The pervasiveness of militarism, and its associated militarized masculinities, was emphasized at the Mexico City feminist convening in 2019:<sup>56</sup>

*Underpinned by a burgeoning global military-industrial complex, militarization in the name of national security infiltrates everyday life as the military is co-opted into civilian functions like civil governance, climate change, humanitarian and development systems, criminal justice, and policing. These public security forces are some of the biggest perpetrators of violence against women and other marginalised groups.*

That 2020 is not only the year of COVID-19 but also the twentieth anniversary of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, which initiated the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda, has been highlighted by many feminists. As Anderlini writes, the “pandemic is also revitalising criticism of the ballooning military budgets and the cost and carnage of the forever wars, while calling for investment in health, education and public infrastructures.”<sup>57</sup>

The Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda is thus relevant across a whole set of issues, by reframing sustainable and equitable development in terms of human rather than national security, for:<sup>58</sup>

*in calling for human security that is people-centric and a gendered lens, the resolution and the agenda convey the paradigm shift needed in understanding and tackling contemporary global peace and security issues. The issues that are so often called for by the WPS community are profoundly relevant to this pandemic too.*

But the power of the global military-industrial complex, and its associated militarist cultures and militarized masculinities, continues to inhibit progress on the WPS agenda and its gendered human security paradigm. As the UN Secretary-General’s 2015 report on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 emphasized, “[m]ilitarism and cultures of militarized masculinities create and sustain political decision-making where resorting to the use of force becomes a normalized mode for dispute resolution.”<sup>59</sup> To address this, the report urged Member States, the UN and civil society to “[p]rovide financial, technical and political support to encourage educational and leadership training for men, women, boys and girls, which reinforces and supports nonviolent, non-militarized expressions of masculinity.”<sup>60</sup> Given the above, it is clear that intensified efforts to challenge and transform patriarchal militarized masculinities are urgently needed.

### **Resurgent feminist movements**

Feminist movements continue to lead this challenge, and recent years have witnessed a resurgence in their voice and visibility. From youth climate activism, to MeToo/Ni Una Menos protests, to the Black Lives Matter movement, there are renewed political energies ‘from below’ which reflect a profound

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<sup>55</sup> Johnston, Melissa and Jacqui True. 2019. "Misogyny and Violent Extremism: Implications for Preventing Violent Extremism." Melbourne, Australia: Monash Gender, Peace and Security Centre, Monash University.

<sup>56</sup> Anon 2019. p4

<sup>57</sup> Anderlini, Sanam Naraghi. 2020. "Women Peace and Security in the Time of Corona." Retrieved: August 2, 2020 (<https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/wps/2020/03/25/women-peace-and-security-in-the-time-of-corona/>).

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> UN Women. 2015. "Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325." New York: UN Women. p207

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. p214

intersectional feminist challenge to the failed status quo. As commentators have noted recently, the feminist-strike movement, which began in Poland in October 2016, when over a hundred thousand women staged walkouts and marches to oppose that country's ban on abortion, has been central to this challenge. As Arruzza et al, authors of the book *Feminism for the 99 Per Cent: A Manifesto* made clear in 2018:<sup>61</sup>

*For the last two years, its slogans have resonated around the globe: Nosotras Paramos, We Strike, Vivas Nos Queremos, Ni Una Menos, Feminism for the 99 per cent. At first a ripple, then a wave, it has become a global phenomenon.*

Crucially, this resurgence of intersectional feminist activism has focused on the relationships and infrastructures of collective care and social solidarity, whose undermining by neoliberal political economy the COVID-19 pandemic has so clearly exposed.<sup>62</sup>

*Resistance against neoliberalism has shifted to other arenas: healthcare, education, pensions, housing-the labour and services necessary to reproduce human beings and social communities. From the strike wave of US teachers to the struggle against water privatization in Ireland and the protests of Dalit sanitation workers in India, it is here that we find the most militant fightbacks—led and powered by women.*

Intergovernmental processes such as the UN-sponsored Generation Equality initiative, the UN Climate Change Conferences, the Agenda 2030 and SDG framework, Beijing Platform for Action and CEDAW process all provide an architecture within which to give voice and visibility to demands for political transformation. But the pressure for such transformation must still be maintained. For many years, such intergovernmental processes and spaces have also been sites for patriarchal backlash, a backlash which in recent years has been intensifying. As scholars have recently noted, “[a]ntifeminist mobilisation is growing in the United Nations”, uniting a diverse range of forces around “the aim of restoring the ‘natural family’ and opposing ‘gender ideology’.”<sup>63</sup> The need to counter such regressive “family values” and the anti-feminist politics they support is pressing; Cupać and Ebetürk warn that we are “looking at a group with the potential to alter not only the global course of women’s rights but also how politics is done within the UN.”<sup>64</sup>

In response, both inside and outside of formal political structures and processes, feminist movements are organizing around a transformative vision of gender justice, grounded in commitments to social justice, human security, and economic and political transformation. Increasingly, as Arruzza et al note, this feminist resurgence is joining “forces with other anti-capitalist movements across the globe—with environmentalist, anti-racist, anti-imperialist and LGBTQ+ movements and labour unions, and above all with their anti-capitalist currents.”<sup>65</sup> The closing statement of the Women’s Rights Caucus Feminist Declaration, states unequivocally that “we remind governments that the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action belongs to our movements” and that “we reject the actions of regressive groups who reinforce

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<sup>61</sup> Arruzza, Cinzia, Tithi Bhattacharya and Nancy Fraser. 2018. "Notes for a Feminist Manifesto." *New Left Review* 114 (November-December): 113-34. p115

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. p116

<sup>63</sup> Cupać, Jelena and Irem Ebetürk. 2020. "The Personal Is Global Political: The Antifeminist Backlash in the United Nations." *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 22(4):1-13. p1

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. p1

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. p133

patriarchy, nationalism, fundamentalism, authoritarianism, and capitalism.” Given this, the question facing organizations and networks concerned with working with men and boys to challenge patriarchal masculinities is how best to connect with, support and act in solidarity with this upsurge in intersectional feminist movement organizing, both on the streets and in the halls of power.

### **Implications for work with men and boys on transforming patriarchal masculinities**

Exploring and identifying answers to this question for MenEngage Alliance will be the work of this Strategic Plan. Policy advocacy on SRHR issues and SOGIESC rights, in partnership and solidarity with feminist and LGBTQIA+ leaders and organizations, has been an important focus of the Alliance’s work during 2017-2020 period, and this must continue given the “anti-gender” organizing in intergovernmental spaces described above. Such organizing, and a backlash against progressive gains in women’s rights and rights for LGBTQIA+ communities, is evident in many countries. Feminist and LGBTQIA+ organizations are confronting this backlash in national and regional policy spaces, which MenEngage networks at regional and national levels must be active in supporting.

Promoting democratic reform to advance women’s rights and rights for LGBTQIA+ communities has not to-date been a common focus of gender justice work with men and boys. In its role of fostering a community of practice for this work, MenEngage Alliance has an opportunity to support members in learning how best to take gender transformative work with men and boys into political processes and spaces, including political parties themselves. MenEngage members also need to be alert to the ways in which “Positive Fatherhood” programming has been enlisted by neoliberalism’s “attack on the social”. In this sense, parenting work with men is inherently political, not just in terms of shifting the domestic division of care work, but also in relation to highlighting the linked responsibilities of families and the State in the provision of care.

The political uses of a discourse of traditional family values can also be seen in a growing ethnonationalism in many parts of the world. Calls to protect the nation-as-family often rely on racialized narratives and images of the sexually violent male Other. Building stronger partnerships with anti-racist movements, indigenous people’s struggles and immigrant and refugee rights organizations to confront this use of racialized masculinities is an urgent priority for MenEngage members. So too is the continuing need to highlight the interdependence of militarism and military-industrial complex with the maintenance of patriarchal masculinities. As the COVID-19 pandemic has only further highlighted, masculinized militarist mindset is widespread across many aspects of not only military but also civilian life. Through its community of practice, MenEngage Alliance will continue to develop our knowledge base, political stance and share lessons as to how best to challenge and transform such patriarchal militarized masculinities.

## **1.1.2 Economic contexts**

*Our economic rules have been written by rich and powerful men in their own interests. The neoliberal economic model of today has made this worse – cuts to public services, cuts to taxes for the richest individuals and corporations, and a race to the bottom on wages have all hurt women more than men.<sup>66</sup>*

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<sup>66</sup> Lawson, Max, Man-Kwun Chan, Francesca Rhodes, Anam Parvez Butt, Anna Marriott, Ellen Ehmke, Didier Jacobs, Julie Seghers, Jaime Atienza and Rebecca Gowland. 2019. "Public Good or Private Wealth?" *Oxfam Briefing Paper*. Oxford, UK: Oxfam International.

## Links between gender injustice and economic injustice

Poverty and economic marginalization are gendered. Women in the 25-34 year old age group are more likely to live in poor households: 122 women for every 100 men.<sup>67</sup> Globally, women earn 23 percent less than men; over their lifetimes women have less opportunity than men to engage in paid work, they earn less in more precarious or poorly paid work, and are less able to invest in assets (such as land, credit, insurance and skills.)<sup>68</sup> In Mexico, girls born in the poorest 20 percent of the population have twice the probability of remaining poor throughout their lifetime than their male counterparts.<sup>69</sup> Land remains the most important asset in many societies, yet, women still account for only 12.8 percent of agricultural landholders in the world.<sup>70</sup> In many cases, this economic injustice is legally mandated. Discriminatory laws continue to threaten women's economic security, career growth, and work-life balance. On average, women have just three-fourths of the legal rights afforded to men. Ninety countries still have at least one restriction on the jobs women can do.<sup>71</sup> Discriminatory laws oppress LGBTQIA+ communities in many ways, including economic. Although adequate data on the economic marginalization faced by LGBTQIA+ people is missing for many countries, what data exists makes clear that "indicators of economic disparity including food insecurity, housing instability, low-wage earning potential, and unemployment and under-employment are all heightened for LGBTQIA+ individuals and communities."<sup>72</sup> A 2013 survey conducted by Transgender and Intersex Africa (TIA) found high levels of unemployment among trans and intersex South Africans.<sup>73</sup>

For several decades now, women's economic empowerment has been a centerpiece of Gender and Development policy and programming. Watkins notes the progress made: "A mass of data now shows that women have entered the global waged-labour force in their hundreds of millions since the 1970s", while in "tertiary education, girls outnumber boys in over seventy countries."<sup>74</sup> But she also emphasizes that "advances in gender equality have gone hand-in-hand with soaring socio-economic inequality across most of the world."<sup>75</sup> UN Women concurs, reporting that "in a world where wealth and assets are increasingly concentrated and controlled by a fraction of the global population, women's gains have been uneven between countries, and among different groups of women."<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Boudet, Ana Maria Munoz, Paola Buitrago, Benedicte Leroy de la Briere, David Newhouse, Eliana Rubiano Matulevich, Kinnon Scott and Pablo Suarez-Becerra. 2018. "Gender Differences in Poverty and Household Composition through the Life-Cycle: A Global Perspective." *Policy Research Working Paper 8360*. Washington, DC: World Bank Group.

<sup>68</sup> Lawson et al. 2019.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> FAO. 2015. "Gender and Land Statistics: Recent Developments in Fao's Gender and Land Rights Database." Rome, Italy: Food and Agriculture Organization.

<sup>71</sup> World Bank. 2020. "Women, Business and the Law 2020." Washington, DC: World Bank.

<sup>72</sup> Hunter, Lourdes Ashley, Ashe McGovern and Carla Sutherland. 2018. "Intersecting Injustice: Addressing LGBTQ Poverty and Economic Justice for All: A National Call to Action." New York: Social Justice Sexuality Project, Graduate Center, City University of New York. p1

<sup>73</sup> Spira, Tamara Lea, Namita Chad and Irene Schneeweis. 2015. "South Africa Lgbti: Landscape Analysis of Political, Economic & Social Conditions." New York, NY: Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice.

<sup>74</sup> Watkins, Susan. 2018. "Which Feminisms?". *New Left Review* 109 (January-February): 5-76. p6

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. p7

<sup>76</sup> UN Women. 2019. "Progress of the World's Women 2019-2020: Families in a Changing World." New York: UN Women. p15

These soaring inequalities and uneven gains produced by neoliberal capitalism have long been the target of feminist critique. As the 2019 feminist convening in Mexico City made clear, neoliberal policies “have exacerbated existing inequalities of power, particularly along the fault lines of resource and wealth disparities between countries, between rich and poor, between men and women, and between dominant and oppressed racial and ethnic groups.”<sup>77</sup> These disparities have been further exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights has recently emphasized, “[f]ar from being the “great leveler,” COVID-19 is a pandemic of poverty, exposing the parlous state of social safety nets for those on lower incomes or in poverty around the world.”<sup>78</sup>

The 2019 Feminist Declaration by the Women’s Rights Caucus makes clear the links between this economic injustice and gender oppression. The Declaration insists that “the neoliberal economic order is a key structural barrier that since 1995 has exacerbated inequalities within and between countries and among genders” and that:<sup>79</sup>

*patriarchy and other systems of oppression reinforce this economic system, which has allowed a small number of wealthy individuals to gain more power, has compromised democratic systems of governance worldwide and allowed authoritarian, fascist and populist figures to thrive.*

Given this, in the words of the Mexico City feminist convening, “[w]omen have long been at the forefront of struggles against this system, understanding it to be fundamentally incompatible with the liberation and empowerment of women, and transgender and gender non-conforming people.”<sup>80</sup>

Gender justice work with men on issues of women’s economic marginalization has, for the most part, yet to catch up with this broader systemic analysis, led by feminists from the Global South and feminists from communities of color and indigenous communities in the Global North. Still confined within an individualized neoliberal paradigm of women’s empowerment and entrepreneurship, work with men has been framed in terms of reducing their opposition to such empowerment. In practice, this has led to the development of group education programs for the male partners of women targeted by microcredit schemes and income generation interventions, whose “masculinities” component has focused on adjusting men’s expectations of being the family breadwinner and improving couple communication within the household.<sup>81</sup>

There is evidence to suggest that “[w]here women’s gains have coincided with men’s declining economic prospects, gender dynamics have become particularly fraught, aggravating relationship breakdown and men’s failure to financially or otherwise support their children.”<sup>82</sup> But framing responses to this solely in

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<sup>77</sup> Anon 2019. p2

<sup>78</sup> Alston, Philip. 2020. “The Parlous State of Poverty Eradication: Report of the Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights.” Geneva, Switzerland: United Nations Human Rights Council, Forty-fourth session 15 June–3 July 2020: Agenda item 3 “Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development”. p9

<sup>79</sup> Women’s Rights Caucus. 2019. para 4

<sup>80</sup> Anon 2019. p2

<sup>81</sup> Edström, Jerker, Alexa Hassink, Thea Shahrokhi and Erin Stern. 2015. “Engendering Men: A Collaborative Review of Evidence on Men and Boys in Social Change and Gender Equality.” EMERGE Evidence Review. Promundo-US, Sonke Gender Justice and the Institute of Development Studies.

<sup>82</sup> UN Women. 2019. “Progress of the World’s Women 2019-2020: Families in a Changing World.” New York: UN Women. p135

terms of change at the individual level only masks the deeper and entwined problems of gender and economic injustice produced by neoliberal capitalism. As the Women's Rights Caucus insists:<sup>83</sup>

*economic empowerment should not be defined with a narrow focus on women's participation in economic markets, but rather focus on women's ability to exercise real power over their economic, social, political and cultural structures, as well as equally benefit from the advancement and development of the society.*

This emphasis on the need to "exercise real power over their economic, social, political and cultural structures" calls attention to the problems of the informalization of the economy, precarious employment and lack of access to social and legal protection and institutional benefits. Women are over-represented in sectors more likely to be unregulated due to their broader and intersectional marginalization across social, political, cultural and economic fronts, and as a result face not only increased economic exploitation but also less protection from workplace harassment, exploitation and violence. The 2019 feminist convening in Mexico City noted that:<sup>84</sup>

*migrant workers are often denied basic rights in their country of work; domestic workers, often doubly marginalized as migrants in the informal sector, exist in a heightened state of precarity due to inadequate labor protections; and sex workers, largely constituted of women, and transgender and gender non-conforming people, experience some of the highest rates of workplace violence due to the stigmatized and unregulated nature of their work.*

Answering the question of what these structural analyses and systemic critiques mean for gender justice work with men and boys is an urgent priority. The importance of building the capacity to "exercise collective power" suggests that labor unions should be a focus of attention. The Women's Rights Caucus urges us to "[r]ecognize the role of unions in advancing women's rights and gender equality by respecting, promoting and protecting the right to freedom of association and the right to organize and bargain collectively, including by removal of laws and restrictions on these rights [...]."<sup>85</sup> Similarly, the Women's Major Group is clear that "trade unions serve as a powerful counterweight to corporate power and monopolies and play an important role in bringing about a more just and equitable economic order."<sup>86</sup> In many countries, labor unions remain male-dominated in their leadership, suggesting that they could be an important entry-point for gender transformative work with men to ensure that organized labour addresses fully the linked problems of gender and economic injustices.

Addressing these links also means recognizing not only gender differences but also class solidarities. The informalization of work, lack of labour protections and deepening of inequalities affects millions of working class men as well as working class women. Writing in 2005, leading theorist of masculinities Raewyn Connell drew attention to "a growing polarization among men on a world scale," with "a privileged minority reaching astonishing heights of wealth and power while much larger numbers face poverty, cultural dislocation, disruption of family relationships, and forced renegotiation of the meanings of masculinity."<sup>87</sup> More recently, Connell has noted the "coloniality" that continues to structure the global

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<sup>83</sup> Women's Rights Caucus. 2019. para 15

<sup>84</sup> Anon 2019. p7

<sup>85</sup> Women's Rights Caucus. 2019. para 16(c)

<sup>86</sup> Women's Major Group. 2020. p6

<sup>87</sup> Connell, Raewyn (2005) "Change among the Gatekeepers: Men, Masculinities, and Gender Equality in the Global Arena." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 30(3): 1801-1825. p1805



economy and its gendered, racialized divisions of labor and class stratifications; this “coloniality of gender concerns not only the old form of imperialism, but also new forms of dependency and global power.”<sup>88</sup> As she continues:<sup>89</sup>

*The international economy has less need of the plantation workforces of the past. But gendered exploitation flourishes in the factories of the ‘south China miracle’, the maquilas of the Mexican borderlands, the huge expatriate workforce of the oil industry in the Persian Gulf states, or among the ‘baomu’, migrant domestic workers, of neo-liberal China. Transnational corporations operate through relations between a masculinized managerial elite and gender-divided local workforces.*

Rapid urbanization is only compounding this poverty, dislocation and exploitation. Cities will account for all future world population growth, which is expected to peak at about 10 billion in 2050.<sup>90</sup> What is more, this urban population growth is concentrated in informal settlements. The informalization of the economies of many societies has meant that urbanization “has been radically decoupled from industrialization, even from development per se,”<sup>91</sup> meaning that “at the end of the day, a majority of urban slum-dwellers are truly and radically homeless in the contemporary international economy.”<sup>92</sup>

The global economy was in trouble even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, with a slowing down of economic activities, and much longer trends in industrial overcapacity, and the problem of continuously rising under-employment, increasingly concentrated in lightly or unregulated service sectors, in which workers are at increased risk of economic exploitation. As Benanav warns:<sup>93</sup>

*Unless halted by concerted political action, the coming decades are likely to see more of the same: overcapacity in international markets for agricultural and industrial products will continue to push workers out of those sectors and into services, which will see its share of global employment climb from 52 per cent today to 70 or 80 per cent by mid-century.*

ILO reports that 267 million young people aged 15 to 24 worldwide (or 22 percent of that age group) are not in any form of employment, education or training. On the one hand, these long term trends make clear the shared interests that millions of workers, of all genders, have in pushing for fundamental economic reform. On the other hand, the tying of masculinity to waged work, dating back to the rise of industrial capitalism in the 19th century, means that the growth of precarious, under-employment can often be experienced as a crisis of masculinity.

Noting a “new ‘crisis of masculinity’ amongst male members of the working class and underclass across the Western contexts”,<sup>94</sup> Roose among others warns that “the state and political status quo are battling to counter the emotionally manipulative narratives of populist movements that capture the alienation,

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<sup>88</sup> Connell, Raewyn. 2014. "Margin Becoming Centre: For a World-Centred Rethinking of Masculinities." NORMA: The International Journal for Masculinity Studies 9(4):217-31. p226

<sup>89</sup> Ibid. p226

<sup>90</sup> Davis, Mike. 2004. "Planet of the Slums: Urban Involution and the Informal Proletariat." *New Left Review* 26(March-April):5-34.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid. p9

<sup>92</sup> Ibid. p26

<sup>93</sup> Ibid. p129

<sup>94</sup> Roose, Joshua (2017) "Citizenship, Masculinities and Political Populism. Preliminary Considerations in the Context of Contemporary Social Challenges." In *The Transformation of Citizenship (vol. 3): Struggle, Resistance and Violence*, edited by J. Mackert & B. Turner, 56–76. Abingdon, UK: Routledge. p63

anxiety, anger, humiliation and resentment of marginalised young men.”<sup>95</sup> In other words, the economic concerns of marginalized men, tied to their expectations of and sense of entitlement to waged work, is being exploited for politically regressive purposes in many societies. Building cross-gender class solidarities to challenge the exploitation and inequalities produced by the current neoliberal economic order must involve efforts to change the persistent and dominant narrative that connects masculinity to waged work in many societies. Gender justice work with men and boys has a role to play in helping to shift this narrative and contribute to promoting a vision of economic justice for people of all genders.

### **Environmental and Climate catastrophe**

The risks of not securing this vision of economic justice are existential. The current neoliberal economic system is not only wrecking lives, but destroying the basis of life for future generations. Climate change is one of the most urgent global challenges facing the world today. We are the first generation to know that we are capable of undermining the Earth’s delicate ecosystem and most likely the last generation with the ability to do anything about it. The warning issued by the 2019 feminist convening in Mexico City could not be starker:<sup>96</sup>

*Global warming is profoundly reshaping communities, ecosystems and the biosphere, threatening their very survival. Rooted in neoliberal capitalism and exacerbated by an extractivist development model and fossil fuel dependence, this system is increasing inequalities and violence within and between states, and hastening the current sixth Anthropocene mass extinction of 150-200 species per day through habitat destruction, overhunting, toxic pollution, non-endemic species invasion, and climate change.*

The gender dimensions of the climate crisis are well documented.<sup>97</sup> Of particular concern to MenEngage Alliance, and our commitment to transform patriarchal masculinities, is the long-standing eco-feminist analysis of climate change as rooted in histories of colonial resource extraction and capitalist industrial production, which themselves are shaped and legitimated by patriarchal logic of domination and exploitation. This is not an abstract logic. Analysis of carbon producing entities, such as oil corporations, finds that 90 percent of historical emissions since the 1750s can be traced to the 90 largest fossil fuel and cement producers, most still in business today, and all of them dominated by male ownership, leadership and staff.<sup>98</sup> Proposals for a “green transition” to a post-carbon economy fueled by renewable energy must address the need to confront this patriarchal logic and the masculinized corporate and industrial power structures it has sustained.

In very practical terms, any transition to ‘green’ economies must deal with the radical transformation of capitalist, colonial and male-dominated industries. This is not just about re-training workers, once again, the masculinization of industrial production and extractivist economies means that the “green transition” must involve transformation in gender narratives about the future of work. Such a transition must also contend with the male-dominated and masculine corporates and State elites who benefit from the current

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid. p58

<sup>96</sup> Anon 2019. p2-3

<sup>97</sup> Kato-Wallace, Jane. et.al. 2019. "Men, Masculinities & Climate Change: A Discussion Paper." Washington, DC: MenEngage Alliance.

<sup>98</sup> Heede, Richard. 2014. "Tracing Anthropogenic Carbon Dioxide and Methane Emissions to Fossil Fuel and Cement Producers, 1854–2010." *Climatic Change* 122:229- 41.

neoliberal economic order, and the violence they unleash to protect their vested interests. As the Mexico City feminist convening made clear:<sup>99</sup>

*Global capital is more fearsome than ever, shepherded through decades of unrestrained growth and extractivism by neoliberal dominance, and unchecked by neo-extractivist developmentalist models. In its pursuit of profit, it has caused ecological devastation, underdevelopment, violence, and repression through deepening authoritarianism worldwide.*

The impacts have been most devastating on the most marginalized.<sup>100</sup> This intersectional feminist understanding of the climate catastrophe highlights the intersectional nature of the gender inequalities unleashed as a result. Women and girls from affected communities have been in the forefront of struggles defending their rights in the face of threats posed by corporate and State elites. Participants at the Mexico City convening in 2019 drew attention to the fact that “[w]ith the rise of public private partnerships (PPPs) in areas as diverse as natural resource extraction, energy, infrastructure and social provisioning, private interests are invading areas central to women’s lives and livelihoods.”<sup>101</sup> As they highlighted:

*In many contexts, resistance to these projects is met with violence, including sexual violence; limits to freedom of expression and association; and threats to the right to life as women human rights defenders are arbitrarily detained, tortured, disappeared, and killed with impunity in the face of state complicity and inaction.*

The degradation of livelihoods and biospheres produced by climate change is also fueling an unprecedented displacement and movement of people, both within and between countries and across continents. As many studies have shown, women, girls and LGBTQIA+ people face many forms of violence and exploitation at all stages of their journeys as migrants and refugees, from State officials, military personnel and criminal gangs alike.<sup>102</sup> Recent research by the Women’s Refugee Commission to examine the nature and characteristics of sexual violence perpetrated against refugees and migrants traveling the central Mediterranean route to Italy found that sexual violence against all refugees and migrants -women, men, girls, boys, and persons with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or sex characteristics (SOGIESC)- was commonplace, and that sexual violence, including sexual torture, against female and male refugees and migrants appeared widespread in Libya.<sup>103</sup> In thinking through the links between patriarchal masculinities and climate catastrophe, it is evident that the many forms of gender-based violence and other forms of injustices associated with it must be more clearly addressed, and those responsible held accountable.

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<sup>99</sup> Anon 2019. p2

<sup>100</sup> The Mexico City feminist convening noted that the effects of climate change are “particularly acute for those living in small island states and territories, least developed countries, the global South, as well as for indigenous peoples, urban poor, rural and remote communities, Afro-descendant people, people with disabilities, migrant communities, LGBTI people, ethnic minorities, girls, the elderly, communities experiencing descent and work based discrimination, and many others.” Anon 2019. p3

<sup>101</sup> Ibid. p6

<sup>102</sup> See <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/gender-based-violence-against-women-both-cause-migration-and-risk-along-journey>

<sup>103</sup> Chynoweth, Sarah. 2019. “More Than One Million Pains”: Sexual Violence against Men and Boys on the Central Mediterranean Route to Italy.” New York, NY: Women’s Refugee Commission.

## Care economies

Events of 2020 have made clearer than ever before that the restructuring required by the transition to a post-carbon economy also requires new visions of the labour and social relations of care, for both current and future generations. The Feminist Impact for Rights and Equality Consortium (FIRE), *a collective of five global organisations committed to accelerating a feminist vision of international peace and human security*, makes clear that “[h]uman-driven environmental degradation, climate change and a capitalist economic system that prioritises economic growth and profit above all else have made the emergence and spread of COVID-19 and other zoonotic viruses not only possible but also highly likely.”<sup>104</sup> The rapid onset of the COVID-19 pandemic exposed the frailty of care systems in many societies, weakened in many cases by the neoliberal “retreat from social provisioning” discussed earlier. At the same time, the pandemic has highlighted once again how central gender inequalities are to care work, whether unpaid or low paid. Research makes clear the extent to which responsibilities for household work, nursing the sick, and caring for children and the elderly have only further intensified for women and girls during COVID-19.<sup>105</sup>

Efforts to redress gender inequalities in the care economy have long been an important focus of gender justice programming and policy-making. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’s goal on Gender Equality (Goal 5) recognizes the need to address the disproportionate burden of unpaid care and domestic work borne by women and girls. Many studies highlight that “‘motherhood penalties’ in the form of reduced employment rates and a pay gap between women with and without children are a persistent problem.”<sup>106</sup> Compared to men, women do three times the amount of unpaid care and domestic work within families, with particularly stark inequalities in many Global South contexts, where access to time-saving infrastructure and public services is more limited.<sup>107</sup> In its 2019 Feminist Declaration, the Women’s Rights Caucus calls on “governments to commit to direct efforts toward the realization of economic, social and cultural rights of women, girls and gender non-conforming persons”, including “the recognition, reduction and redistribution of care and domestic work”.<sup>108</sup>

The impacts of COVID-19 lockdown measures have only heightened this disparity, with most research suggesting that even when men and boys are denied the ability to leave the home, it is the women and girls in the family who continue to do most of the household work.<sup>109</sup> The recognition that men and boys can support progress toward both gender and economic justice by participating more actively and equitably in the work of ‘cooking, cleaning and caring’ has driven the significant expansion in fatherhood and/or parenting programming and policy advocacy in recent years, and the attention given to the care economy in gender justice work with men more generally.<sup>110</sup> An orientation toward the individual as the

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<sup>104</sup> FIRE Consortium. 2020. "Feminist Principles for an International Post-Covid-19 Settlement: Presented to the United Nations General Assembly." New York, NY: Feminist Impact for Rights and Equality (FIRE) Consortium. p9

<sup>105</sup> Bolis, Mara, Anam Parvez, Emma Holten, Leah Mugehera, Nabil Abdo and Maria Jose Moreno. 2020. "Care in the Time of Coronavirus: Why Care Work Needs to Be at the Centre of a Post-Covid-19 Feminist Future." Oxfam Briefing Paper. Oxford, UK: Oxfam International.

<sup>106</sup> UN Women. 2019. "Progress of the World’s Women 2019-2020: Families in a Changing World." New York: UN Women. p15

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Women’s Rights Caucus. 2019. para 15

<sup>109</sup> MADRE. 2020. "Care and Connection in Crisis: Feminist Strategy to Confront Covid-19." New York, NY: MADRE.

<sup>110</sup> van der Gaag, Nikki, Brian Heilman, Taveeshi Gupta, Ché Nembhard and Gary Barker. 2019. "State of the World’s Fathers: Unlocking the Power of Men’s Care." Washington, DC: Promundo-US.

site and agent of change continues to shape both programming and policy advocacy on men's relationship to and responsibilities within care economies.

In its recommendations, the State of the World's Fathers report focuses its call for a transformation in gender norms prioritizes, however its four proposed strategies primarily focus on changing individual attitudes to "training to change attitudes" and "media campaigns to inspire men, their families, and their communities to support men's caregiving."<sup>111</sup> The most recent recommendations by the global MenCare campaign lay an important emphasis on the need to "improve laws and policies" (e.g. on "equal, fully paid, non-transferable parental leave for all parents") and to "transform social and gender norms" (e.g. "governments must provide training to change attitudes of service providers such as teachers, child care workers and health care providers".) This emphasis on the need for structural change is further reinforced by its call to "guarantee economic and physical security for vulnerable families."<sup>112</sup>

The need to address the structural dimensions of care economies is also emphasized by UN Women, in its 2018 report discussing progress on the Sustainable Development Goals. It makes explicit reference to the "institutional framework for care," which includes "the family but also the market, the state and the not-for-profit sector, constituting a 'care diamond'."<sup>113</sup> This institutional analysis underpins the politics of redistribution that informs the report's ability to frame the gendered challenges of redistributing care work beyond the gender binary of the heteronormative family unit. It makes clear that "[r]edistribution requires policies that ensure that the provision of care is shared more equitably among families, states, markets and the not-for-profit sector, as well as between women and men within families."<sup>114</sup>

This formulation can help to broaden perspectives on and understanding of men's differing relationships to and responsibilities within care economies, beyond the "fatherhood" frame and its emphasis on men's familial responsibilities toward children. Such a formulation enables a consideration of the unpaid and underpaid feminized care workforce, transnational care supply chains, the long-term needs of care-dependent older persons and the basic infrastructures of water, sanitation, food security, transport and accessible, affordable and quality early childhood education and care that support the provision of unpaid care and domestic work. If gender transformative work with men and boys is to embrace this broad formulation and address the patriarchal dimensions of the issues outlined above, then it must take care not to be complicit with a public policy discourse on the care economy that centers attention on the family and men's "irresponsible" masculinity. For, as discussed earlier, it is this discourse of men's "irresponsible" masculinity on which the "family values" ideology of neoliberalism has, in part, relied.

Prior to the onset of COVID-19, the Mexico City convening outlined a radical feminist agenda to "recognize, reduce, and redistribute unpaid care and domestic work."<sup>115</sup> This included:<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid. p57

<sup>112</sup> Ibid. p10

<sup>113</sup> UN Women. 2018. "Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development." New York: UN Women. p219

<sup>114</sup> Ibid. p224

<sup>115</sup> Anon 2019. p12

<sup>116</sup> Ibid. p12

*ensuring universal access to quality public care services; guaranteeing living wages and access to social protection in care jobs; significantly increasing public investment in the care economy; mandating paid parental and family leave; and providing pension care credits for time spent out of the labour force to raise children/care for dependants.*

Advocacy in support of this radical agenda is one clear priority for organizations and networks concerned with challenging patriarchal masculinities. But perhaps a bigger challenge for such organizations and networks, seeking to work in solidarity with feminist visions of economic transformation for intersectional gender justice, is to envision relations of care for each other and for the planet that transcend the masculine-feminine binary separating production from social reproduction. As a recent paper by Oxfam reports, many “ecofeminist and indigenous ethicists have argued that care is a determinant aspect of the interdependency between communities, society and the environment” and that not only an ethics but also a politics of care must be centred/foregrounded “when the aim is to support communities to exercise their power and care for themselves and the planet.”<sup>117</sup> But, as the report continues, “[c]aring for the planet, however, is too often framed as a ‘feminine’ attitude and rejected by machista (male chauvinist), patriarchal value systems that devalue and erase the work of women, translating into an eco-gender gap.”<sup>118</sup> It is this binary distinction between masculinized ‘work’ and feminized ‘care’ that must be overcome.

#### **Implications for work with men and boys on transforming patriarchal masculinities**

*What might these economic contexts mean for gender transformative work with men and boys?* Answering this question will, once again, be a significant focus for the work of MenEngage Alliance in the 2021-24 period of this Strategic Plan. Any answer must begin, however, with the recognition that gender transformative work with men and boys must identify the contributions that such work can make to the radical systems change called for by feminists the world over. As the Beijing+25 feminist convening in Mexico City in 2019 made clear:<sup>119</sup>

*As we understand patriarchal structures and white supremacy to be central to the current functioning of neoliberal capitalism - evident in the mountain of unpaid care work on which corporate profits rest - the market cannot be an effective mechanism through which to correct gender, racial, or ethnic inequality. Instead, active policy interventions that seek to restructure the current, unequal state of the economy and society are fundamental to a feminist approach.*

As this discussion of economic contexts makes clear, the “current, unequal state of the economy and society” is not only destroying the planet and exploiting and killing women, girls and transgender and gender non-conforming people; the lives of cisgendered, heterosexual men and boys too are threatened in many ways by neoliberal capitalism, especially those marginalized by forces of economic and racial oppression. Male-focused gender transformative work can help men and boys to see their own interests in the systems change agenda being advanced by feminists across the world. Part of this agenda identifies the need to build the power of organized labor, and gender work with men in labor unions may be useful in this regard.

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<sup>117</sup> Piaget, Kim, Clare Coffey, Sebastián Molano and Maria José Moreno Ruiz. 2020. “Feminist Futures: Caring for People, Caring for Justice and Rights.” Oxfam Discussion Paper. Oxford, UK: Oxfam International. p10

<sup>118</sup> Ibid. p10

<sup>119</sup> Anon 2019. p3

The work of developing policy advocacy and programming to promote and support boys' and men's greater involvement in the care economy and fostering care-giving norms must continue. And more fundamentally, a vision of sustainable and equitable life-making, collective care and social solidarity beyond the patriarchal masculine-feminine binary is needed. The related demands of climate justice, economic justice and gender justice require that MenEngage Alliance members and its constituent networks and structures build a closer dialogue with feminist groups and leaders active on issues of climate and economic justice rights, and racial and indigenous justice. Only through such collaborations can the ideological, institutional and individual changes needed to realize this vision be advanced.

### 1.1.3 Social contexts

*Not only is it essential that we fight for the feminist cause for its own end, but as we are increasingly seeing, anti-feminism is acting as a prominent route into the wider far right for many, making it core to the mission of fighting hate and restoring hope in society more widely.<sup>120</sup>*

Over the last decade or more, gender transformative work with men and boys has increasingly been framed as challenging and changing “harmful norms of masculinity”. References to the need for social norms change recur frequently in project proposals, policy advocacy and funding requests associated with the field of gender justice work with men and boys. The Impact statement of the MenEngage Alliance itself in its 2017-20 Strategic Plan explicitly articulates the work of the Alliance in terms of “strengthening efforts aiming to change discriminatory norms related to men’s and boy’s attitudes, responsibilities and roles, at country, regional and global levels.”<sup>121</sup> A critical task, then, in developing the new Strategic Plan for the Alliance’s work in the 2021-24 period is to assess current trends in such norms, and how social attitudes on gender relations, women’s rights and LGBTQIA+ issues are being shaped by the political and economic factors and forces discussed above. This section outlines such trends, reviewing briefly the available data and drawing out the implications for work with men and boys on transforming patriarchal masculinities.

#### **Trends in social attitudes on women’s rights and LGBTQIA+ issues**

One source of data is research on electoral support for authoritarian, patriarchal political ideologies, whose growing influence was discussed in section 1.2.1. A recent and large-scale study of voting patterns for populist-authoritarian parties between 2000-2017 examined data from 39 European countries and the USA.<sup>122</sup> Norris and Inglehart argue that such support is best understood in terms of what they term “cultural backlash”. They conclude that gender conservatism and attachment to authoritarian values, rather than economic circumstances and grievances, account most accurately for voters’ support for far-right parties. In advancing this “cultural backlash” thesis to explain the growing support for populist-authoritarian parties, Norris and Inglehart emphasize the significance of generational divides. They note that older people with more authoritarian values drive voting for populist-authoritarian parties, and that they do so as a reaction to long-term trends in rising social liberalism in the population (but a slower shift

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<sup>120</sup> Murdoch, S. (2019) "Why Understanding The UK Anti-Feminist Movement Is Vital To Countering The Far Right." *Huffington Post* [Online] [Accessed February 26]. p3

<sup>121</sup> See <http://menengage.org/4451-2/>

<sup>122</sup> Norris, Pippa and Ronald Inglehart. 2019. *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit, and Authoritarian Populism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

in the electorate), which threatens socially conservative authoritarian voters and their identities around faith, family and nation. Importantly, they recognize that worsening economic conditions since 2008 have heightened this sense of threat to a 'way of life', and that far-right parties and leaders have exploited this opportunity with messaging that reinforces a sense of cultural crisis with respect to socially conservative 'family values'.

There is also some evidence to suggest that this sense of crisis has resonated with men in particular. Acknowledging the generational dimension noted above, other studies have also highlighted the significance of gender for such far-right voting patterns. Surveying the available studies on electoral support for political parties in Europe, Coffé emphasizes that "[o]ne of the most consistent findings in the research on radical right voting has been the gender-specific profile of the radical right electorate," with women "significantly underrepresented among radical right voters compared with men."<sup>123</sup> Other studies portray a more complex picture of the gender dimensions of far-right support. Recent research has noted the growing numbers of women not only voting for far-right parties, but also joining as members.<sup>124</sup> One of the most often quoted statistics from the US Presidential election in 2016 is that 53 percent of white women voted Republican, for a self-avowed misogynist rather than for the first female Presidential candidate in US history.<sup>125</sup> More generally, large-scale surveys of social attitudes indicate that support for progress on gender equality may be weakening. A 2020 report based on the World Values Survey concludes that "[m]ore worrying, despite decades of progress in advancing women's rights, bias against gender equality is increasing in some countries, with evidence of a backlash in attitudes among both men and women."<sup>126</sup> Furthermore, "[s]urveys have shown that younger men may be even less committed to equality than their elders."<sup>127</sup>

This trend analysis is reinforced by studies examining men's gender attitudes more specifically. In its early years, analyses of data from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) suggested a positive trend. The background paper prepared for the 2nd MenEngage Global Symposium in 2014 reported that IMAGES surveys from nine countries "found that men in all of the countries, with the exception of India, are generally supportive of gender equality" and that "younger generations of men are more supportive of gender equality and more likely to engage in household tasks than older generations."<sup>128</sup>

More recent surveys present a different picture, however. Studies of men's attitudes in Mexico, UK and USA suggest that younger men are not necessarily more supportive of gender equality than older men.<sup>129</sup> The results of an IMAGES study in the Middle East and North Africa in 2017 found that the majority of

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<sup>123</sup> Coffé, Hilde. 2018. "Gender and the Radical Right." Pp. 1-11 in *The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right*, edited by J. Rydgren. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p2

<sup>124</sup> Bitzan, Renate. 2017. "Research on Gender and the Far Right in Germany since 1990: Developments, Findings, and Future Prospects." Pp. 65-78 in *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*, edited by M. Köttig, R. Bitzan and A. Petö.

<sup>125</sup> Davis, Mike. 2017. "The Great God Trump and the White Working Class." *Catalyst* 1(1).

<sup>126</sup> Ibid. p9

<sup>127</sup> Ibid. p9

<sup>128</sup> Ricardo, Christine. 2014. "Men, Masculinities, and Changing Power: A Discussion Paper on Engaging Men in Gender Equality from Beijing 1995 to 2015." *MenEngage Alliance and UN Women*. p29

<sup>129</sup> Heilman, B., Barker, G., and Harrison, A. (2017). *The Man Box: A Study on Being a Young Man in the US, UK, and Mexico*. Washington, DC and London: Promundo-US and Unilever.



men surveyed in four countries support a wide array of inequitable, traditional attitudes. Perhaps more worryingly, in three of the four countries included in the study (Morocco, Palestine, and Egypt), younger men did not consistently show more equitable attitudes and key practices than their older counterparts.<sup>130</sup> A clear conclusion drawn from the study was that “too many men and boys in the region continue to uphold norms that perpetuate violence against women or confine women to conventional restrictive roles, and they act on these attitudes in ways that cause harm to women, children, and themselves.”<sup>131</sup>

Recent research in Uganda echoes this finding. A 2019 report on IMAGES data notes that:<sup>132</sup>

*IMAGES findings suggest limited support for, and perhaps some backlash against, ideas around gender equality in Central Uganda. Many men subscribe to a zero-sum view of equality – over half of male survey respondents said more rights for women mean that men lose out, and one in three agreed that when women work, they are taking jobs away from men.*

Surveys of attitudes toward LGBTQIA+ people and their rights suggest a mixed picture with respect to SOGIESC issues in the broader context of attitudes toward gender justice and sexual rights. The Pew Research Center, in a 2020 global study, reports encouragingly that in many countries, “there has been an increasing acceptance of homosexuality.”<sup>133</sup> But it also notes that despite major changes in laws and norms surrounding the issue of same-sex marriage and the rights of LGBTQIA+ people around the world, public opinion on the acceptance of homosexuality in society remains sharply divided by country, region and socio-economic developments. The study also reports that in most of the countries surveyed, there are no significant differences between men and women. But as it continues, “for all 12 countries surveyed where there was significant difference, women were more likely to approve of homosexuality than men.”<sup>134</sup>

Further evidence for a trend toward increasing opposition to gender equality, especially among men, may be found in the growing visibility of organizations self-identifying as working on “men’s rights”. Section 1.2.4 discusses the digital ecology of the men’s rights movement, collectively referred to as the “manosphere”, and its influence. Here, the characteristics of men’s rights activism will be briefly reviewed, as a key context within which the MenEngage Alliance is working. Such activism is not new. Splits in the “men’s liberation” movement of the 1970s in the Global North meant that:<sup>135</sup>

*On the one hand, men’s rights organizations stressed the costs of narrow conceptions of masculinity to men, and either downplayed or angrily disputed feminist claims that patriarchy*

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<sup>130</sup> Promundo-US. 2017. "Understanding Masculinities: Results from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) - Middle East and North Africa." UN Women and Promundo-US.

<sup>131</sup> MenEngage. 2017. "Discourses and Reflections from the Conference “Masculinities in the Arab World: Trajectories to Peace and Gender Equality.” Washington, DC: MenEngage Alliance, Promundo-US, ABAAD and UN Women Arab Regional Office. p6

<sup>132</sup> Vlahovicova, Kristina, Esther Spindler, Ruti Levtoy and Lilit Hakobyan. 2019. "Evolving Perspectives: Results from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (Images) in Central Uganda." Washington, DC: Promundo-US and International Center for Research on Women. p15

<sup>133</sup> Poushter, Jacob and Nicholas Kent. 2020. "The Global Divide on Homosexuality Persists." *Pew Research Center: Global Attitudes & Trends*. Retrieved: August 9, 2020 (<https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2020/06/25/global-divide-on-homosexuality-persists/>).

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Messner, Michael A. 2016. "Forks in the Road of Men’s Gender Politics: Men’s Rights Vs Feminist Allies." *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy* 5(2):6–20. p8

*benefited men at women's expense. On the other hand, a profeminist (sometimes called 'anti-sexist') men's movement emphasized the primary importance of joining with women to do away with men's institutionalized privileges.*

It is also important not to generalize, as men's rights activism reflects and responds to the political conditions and histories in which it operates. In many parts of the Global North, such activism is also commonly linked with a defence of white supremacy, and a backlash against progress on anti-racism and immigrant rights.<sup>136</sup> There are commonalities, however, which it is useful to clarify. The trend toward an increasing visibility of men's rights activism appears to indicate a reaction both to the changing political economy of gender, by which growing numbers of women are entering waged work and displacing men's breadwinner role in some cases, and to the hard-won feminist gains for women's rights in many countries. In her ethnographic study of the Indian men's rights movement (MRM), Basu explains that "the MRM has gradually increased in tempo, becoming most visible and vociferous since the mid-2000s under the banner organization: "Save Indian Family Foundation" (SIFF)."<sup>137</sup> She emphasizes the centrality of anti-feminism to this growth:<sup>138</sup>

*Men's rights activists (MRAs) and men's rights movements (MRMs) derive their identities in large part in reaction to women's liberation movements. They constitute themselves as being positioned against the foundational challenge of feminism, with feminists being the straw figures whose rhetoric and politics are the focus of the movement's action.*

Significantly, this anti-feminism is not confined to men. Echoing the findings of recent research on far-right parties and organizations in Europe, whose female membership is growing, women appear to play important roles in the Indian men's rights movement. "Women were the primary organizers in many cities", Basu notes, having "typically come to the movement in the shadow of criminal charges filed by their brothers' or sons' wives."<sup>139</sup> The anti-feminism of men's rights activism is often expressed in the language of male victimhood and vulnerability. Basu reports that such "evocations of vulnerability are prominent in the MRM: posters often depict poor and abandoned men, and men's suicide, depression, and unemployment is a primary preoccupation both in public speeches appealing for greater visibility and resources and in everyday counselling."<sup>140</sup> Such appeals to male victimhood are often highly emotive. Research on men's rights activism in Malta noted "how affective the men's rights movement has become, how it has co-opted the language of affect, emotion, feeling, and the personal being political to meet its own ends."<sup>141</sup> In her study, Basu found that men's rights groups were a powerful source of emotional support; "[m]any members emphatically asserted that their lives had changed for the better in gaining a rich sociality."<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Ferber, Abby L. 2000. "Racial Warriors and Weekend Warriors." *Men and Masculinities* 3(1):30-56.

<sup>137</sup> Basu, Srimati. 2016. "Looking through Misogyny: Indian Men's Rights Activists, Law, and Challenges for Feminism." *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law* 28(1):45-68. p52

<sup>138</sup> Ibid. p46

<sup>139</sup> Ibid. p54-55

<sup>140</sup> Ibid. p66

<sup>141</sup> Allan, J. 2016. "Phallic Affect, or Why Men's Rights Activists Have Feelings." *Men and Masculinities* 19(1):22-41. p26

<sup>142</sup> Basu 2016. p55

This shared feeling of victimhood unites men's rights activists not only within but between countries. Often characterized as a feeling of "aggrieved entitlement" in reaction to men's perceived loss of male privilege and authority,<sup>143</sup> Basu notes how this use of "claims of feeling disempowered echoes the trajectory of men's groups in the United States, many of whose leaders went from being in feminist movements to being rabid anti-feminists."<sup>144</sup> Although addressing different issues in different countries, men's rights activists organize around a shared concern about the loss of 'traditional' family values and structures, a loss they blame on both feminist and LGBTQIA+ movements. There is thus a sense of a transnational men's rights movement, whose commonalities can be found:<sup>145</sup>

*in allegations that women's violence matches men's; in the denial, minimization, and excusing of violence; and in assertions that men face difficulties reporting domestic violence, that custodial decisions are biased against fathers, and that the state garners political popularity by supporting feminist arguments.*

For a global social change network focused on working with men and boys to transform patriarchal masculinities, the growing visibility and transnational character of anti-feminist men's rights groups is a pressing concern for the MenEngage Alliance. Confronting the anti-feminist messaging of men's rights organizations, and working with both men and boys to support them in rejecting such messaging, is clearly a priority. To do so, however, requires a clear understanding of the sophistication of both the messaging and organization of men's rights activism. Its explicit use of emotional language of victimhood has already been noted. Basu also emphasizes the extent to which men's rights activism appropriates feminist frames of vulnerability and persecution for anti-feminist purposes, "using discourses of feminism and human rights as strategic currencies" in order to "compete for resources and visibility".<sup>146</sup> In this respect, it is helpful to draw on theories of social movement organizing in order to understand and confront the ways in which men's rights movement strategies:<sup>147</sup>

*fit squarely within the three prominent "repertoires of contention" used by social movements pertaining to gender: the use of "new political opportunities and threats," "shifts in mobilizing structures of communication, [and] coordination," and the "reframing of claims, identities, and culturally resonant meanings."*

This analysis, in turn, suggests a need for MenEngage members to be alert to men's rights organizations' use of political opportunities in their own contexts as well as their "structures of communication", and thus to be ready and able to contest the "reframing of claims, identities, and culturally resonant meanings" of masculinity deployed by the men's rights movement.

### **Normalized gender-based violence**

One of the most dangerous aspects of men's rights movement messaging is its minimization of violence against women and girls, and the often related claim that violence against men and boys is of equivalent concern. Yet, as decades of research make clear, violence against women and girls is normalized to an extraordinary degree in many societies. Approximately one in three women around the world experience

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<sup>143</sup> Kimmel, Michael S. 2017. *Angry White Men: American Masculinity at the End of an Era*. New York, NY: Nation Books.

<sup>144</sup> Basu 2016. p66

<sup>145</sup> Ibid. p51

<sup>146</sup> Basu 2016. p50

<sup>147</sup> Ibid. p53

physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence in their lifetimes. Nearly four in every ten female homicides are committed by an intimate partner, and upwards of 50 percent of children experience violence, often in settings presumed to be safe: the home and at school.<sup>148</sup> Globally, 18 percent of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15–49 have experienced physical and/or sexual violence at the hands of a current or previous partner in the previous 12 months.<sup>149</sup>

Such high levels of intimate partner violence serve to maintain men's control over women's lives both directly, through the fact of the violence, and indirectly, through women's fear of men's violence. In this sense, the effects of domestic violence are not confined to the home. Indeed, it is also the case, though still rarely foregrounded, that when the personal histories of those who commit terrorist violence are known, they frequently include histories of perpetrating violence against intimate partners. As Díaz and Valji emphasize:<sup>150</sup>

*One can find examples of expressed misogyny or domestic violence in the personal histories of nearly all the perpetrators of the worst terrorist incidents and mass killings in Western countries in recent years, which is remarkable because neither misogynist acts or expressions nor violence against women are typically reported and exhaustively documented.*

They note that even though information about the personal histories of the members of the most prominent terrorist groups in the world is not available, when “we do have this information, in the case of individual perpetrators that have lived in Western countries and conduct their attacks there, the pattern that emerges is exactly the same.”<sup>151</sup>

In the weeks following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, alarming increases in violence against women and children were reported, linked to the lockdown measures imposed by many governments. In Chihuahua State, Mexico there was a reported 65 percent increase in femicides between March and April 2020.<sup>152</sup> After the International Rescue Committee opened a GBV Hotline in Lebanon, the number of women and girls seeking support more than doubled between March and April compared to the first two months of the year.<sup>153</sup> UNFPA has warned that an additional 15 million cases of gender-based violence (GBV) will occur every three months that the lockdown continues.<sup>154</sup> But COVID-19 and the public health measures imposed in response, are not the cause of this spike in violence against women and children; they merely expose and worsen the underlying inequalities that fuel this violence.

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<sup>148</sup> Peterman, Amber, Megan O'Donnell, Karen Devries and Alessandra Guedes. 2020. "Violence in Times of Coronavirus—the Ugly Truth." Think Global Health. Retrieved: August 8, 2020 (<https://www.thinkglobalhealth.org/article/violence-times-coronavirus-ugly-truth>).

<sup>149</sup> For the latest data on violence against women, go to [https://www.who.int/health-topics/violence-against-women#tab=tab\\_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/violence-against-women#tab=tab_1)

<sup>150</sup> Díaz, Pablo Castillo and Nahla Valji. 2019. "Symbiosis of Misogyny and Violent Extremism: New Understandings and Policy Implications." *Journal of International Affairs* 72(2):37-56. p44

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.* p45

<sup>152</sup> See <https://www.rescue.org/topic/coronavirus-response>

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>154</sup> See <https://www.unfpa.org/press/new-unfpa-projections-predict-calamitous-impact-womens-health-covid-19-pandemic-continues>

Taking these statistics as a whole, two facts are striking: how common it is that women and girls experience violence, and that this violence is overwhelmingly perpetrated by men. This evidence of the normalization of male violence only reaffirms the conclusion of the UN Secretary-General's 2006 In-depth study on all forms of violence against women: "The pervasiveness of violence against women across the boundaries of nation, culture, race, class and religion points to its roots in patriarchy - the systemic domination of women by men."<sup>155</sup> Legislative progress on violence against women and girls, especially in relation to domestic violence, has been made in many countries. But it remains true that men's violence against women and girls is normal, both in terms of its frequency and the impunity with which it is committed. A large-scale study in the Asia-Pacific region not only revealed high rates of self-reported violence by men but also that 72–97 percent did not experience any legal consequences.<sup>156</sup> Such persistent impunity for male violence, has if anything, been reinforced by the rise to power of openly misogynistic political leadership in a number of countries. The Mexico City feminist convening in 2019 emphasized that "[d]ue to a clear rise in sexism and misogyny, violence against women has been on the increase, including extreme forms of violence such as disappearances, torture, and feminicides, which are widespread and happen with alarming impunity."<sup>157</sup>

It is this normalization of and impunity for men's violence against women and girls that the #MeToo movement has exposed once again. As story after story made clear, such violence is everyday and everywhere; not confined to the home, but in the street, the workplace, in places of care and support and in places of detention. While much of the focus on the "shadow pandemic" of gender-based violence associated with COVID-19 has been on violence in the home, here too a broader perspective is required. The emotional stress that the pandemic places on patients, their relatives and other healthcare workers has increased the risk of violence. Globally, women account for 70 percent of the health and social care workforce. Research before the epidemic found that most violence is targeted at female nurses in emergency departments with long waiting times, in isolated places at patients' homes, or in geriatric or psychiatric departments. There are anecdotal reports of racialized harassment that people, especially women, of East Asian appearance have faced since COVID-19 was first reported in Wuhan, China. Women in insecure employment, including migrant workers and street-based sex workers have faced increased risks of coercive, violent and exploitative behavior. Fears have been raised in several countries about gendered State violence during the pandemic, including violence against women detained as undocumented migrants by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Reports suggest that women, as well as gender and sexual minorities, may be at increased risk of different forms of violence, including sexual exploitation and abuse, in refugee camps and IDP settlements dealing with outbreaks of COVID-19.<sup>158</sup>

As the above examples make clear, men's violence against women and girls is structured by patriarchal relations of power, which themselves are shaped by economic exploitation, racialized oppression, and

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<sup>155</sup> United Nations (2006). In-depth study on all forms of violence against women: Report of the Secretary-General. New York: United Nations General Assembly: Sixty-first session.p28 [para 69]

<sup>156</sup> Fulu, E., X. Warner, S. Miedema, R. Jewkes, T. Roselli and J. Lang (2013). Why Do Some Men Use Violence Against Women and How Can We Prevent It? Summary Report of Quantitative Findings from the United Nations Multi-country Study on Men and Violence in Asia and the Pacific. Bangkok: UNDP, UNFPA, UN Women and UNV.

<sup>157</sup> Anon 2019. p8

<sup>158</sup> Fraser, Erika. 2020. "Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Violence against Women and Girls." VAWG Helpdesk Research Report No. 284. London, UK: Department for International Development.

other intersecting hierarchies of power. The feminists gathered at the Mexico City convening to prepare for the Generation Equality Forum noted that “[a]lthough we are seeing an unprecedented level of awareness globally due to mobilization by women survivors of different forms of violence, violence has persisted and even deepened as the structural issues related to women’s oppression have not been seriously addressed.”<sup>159</sup> These structural issues are intimately connected to the political and economic systems discussed in previous sections.

This analysis complicates the struggles for justice which feminists have waged for decades in confronting the pervasive violence that women and girls face. As the Mexico City convening also emphasized, “women, gender non-conforming people, and Women’s Human Rights Defenders” are increasingly targeted by “the expansion of repressive measures by state and non-state actors”, and that “violence against these groups [has] become increasingly normalized by authoritarian regimes and fascist actors in different regions.”<sup>160</sup> Indeed, “public security forces are some of the biggest perpetrators of violence against women and other marginalised groups.”<sup>161</sup> For many women and girls, then, the State is an agent of violence against them, rather than a source of justice for them.

This understanding of the systemic nature of gender-based violence makes clear that gender transformative work with men and boys must be about systems change, at institutional and ideological levels, as well as efforts to change individual men’s attitudes and behaviors. Díaz and Valji insist on the misogynistic character of this gender-based violence as being ideological, rather than a matter of psychology or culture, because “focusing on misogyny puts the emphasis on the ideology itself, rather than on the circumstances that purportedly affect men’s sense of identity.”<sup>162</sup> The political implications of this framing are unequivocal, understanding “misogyny as a political phenomenon whose purpose is to police and enforce women’s subordination.”<sup>163</sup>

This understanding also highlights the limitations of a “social norms” framework, commonly applied in gender transformative work with men and boys, which addresses such norms as determinants of individual behavior rather than as expressions of systemic power relations. Indeed, there is growing concern within the GBV prevention field that norms-based approaches, if they address norms from a social psychological perspective as determinants of individual violence, understate the need to address the economic conditions and political forces shaping the normalization of patriarchal social relations and the many forms of violence underpinning them. A recent review of violence prevention community activism states that:<sup>164</sup>

*There is an emerging recognition that norms-based strategies may not be sufficient to reduce violence, because social norms are just a part of the portfolio of drivers of violence in any setting. Social norms change may be more effective when embedded as a VAWG reduction strategy in programmes that address multiple drivers of violence.*

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<sup>159</sup> Anon 2019. p8

<sup>160</sup> Ibid. p8

<sup>161</sup> Ibid. p4

<sup>162</sup> Díaz and Valji 2019. p41

<sup>163</sup> Ibid. p49

<sup>164</sup> Jewkes, Rachel, Erin Stern and Leane Ramsoomar. 2019. "Preventing Violence against Women and Girls: Community Activism Approaches to Shift Harmful Gender Attitudes, Roles and Social Norms - Evidence Review." Pretoria, South Africa. p3

This understanding of the systemic nature of gender-based violence, structured by intersecting hierarchies of power, also directs attention to the very different experiences of and relationships to such violence which different groups of men have, based on their differing positions within these hierarchies. The patriarchal violence that maintains the “systemic domination of women by men” also maintains the cisgendered, heteronormative gender binary that structures gender relations in so many societies. The recent report by the UN’s Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity outlines the extent of violence against LGBTQIA+ communities, including the many men and male-identified people within them.<sup>165</sup> Once again, this violence is everyday and everywhere.

The report notes the prevalence of homophobic and transphobic violence in public space, “as a sanction of a person’s actions to publicly express certain sexual orientations and gender identities perceived by the agent of violence and discrimination to be transgressive.”<sup>166</sup> Homophobic and transphobic ideologies are pervasive in many societies; “[i]ncitement to violence, hatred, exclusion and discrimination are also aided by representations in media and cultural channels and lead to increased psychological distress for LGBT persons.”<sup>167</sup> Stonewall (the UK’s largest LGBTQIA+ rights charity) surveyed 5,000 people across the country in 2017, and found that one in five LGBTQIA+ people had experienced an anti-LGBTQIA+ hate crime or incident in the previous 12 months. The rate was even higher when examining the figure for transgender people only, with two in five trans people having experienced a hate crime or incident in the previous 12 months.<sup>168</sup> In Jamaica, a 2016 study of 316 LGBTQIA+ people found that 24 percent of respondents had been threatened with sexual violence in the previous five years on the basis of their real or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, while 32 percent had been threatened with physical violence.<sup>169</sup>

The UN Independent Expert’s report also highlighted the many other factors that structure violence against LGBTQIA+ people; for example, LGBTQIA+ youth “are disproportionately affected by homelessness which results from religious and cultural intolerance that may include sexual and other violence, as well as socioeconomic deprivation.”<sup>170</sup> The movements of people produced by oppressive political and economic conditions also increases vulnerability to homophobic and transphobic violence:<sup>171</sup>

*The structural vulnerability of LGBT persons may be compounded by their status as migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. As they flee discrimination and violence at home, they may be at particular risk of violence, abuse and exploitation at all stages of their journey and at the hands of immigration officers, traffickers and smugglers.*

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<sup>165</sup> United Nations. 2019. "Protection against Violence and Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity: Note by the Secretary-General." United Nations General Assembly: Seventy-fourth session - Item 72 (b) of the preliminary list "Promotion and protection of human rights: human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms". New York, NY: United Nations.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid. p9

<sup>167</sup> Ibid. p10

<sup>168</sup> Gitari, Eric and Mark Walters. 2020. "Hate Crimes against the Lgbt Community in the Commonwealth: A Situational Analysis." London, UK: The Human Dignity Trust.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid

<sup>170</sup> United Nations 2019. p12

<sup>171</sup> Ibid. p14

Irrespective of sexual orientation or gender identity, men and boys living and/or working in all-male environments can be subject to different forms of physical and sexual violence, whose function is to assert and maintain gender hierarchies amongst men. Examples include violence between prisoners and between prisoners and custodial staff,<sup>172</sup> and the violence that male recruits face when joining military and paramilitary forces.<sup>173</sup>

Medical and psychological support services for survivors of different forms of gender-based violence continue to be under-funded and need strengthening and scaling up in most countries. Male survivors often face further barriers to accessing such services due to the stigma attached to male victimization. There are rare but notable examples of men organizing for self-care, such as the Men of Hope Refugee Association Uganda (MOHRAU), an organization run by and for male survivors of conflict-related sexual violence.<sup>174</sup> A continuing challenge for the field of gender transformative work with men and boys on patriarchal masculinities is to respond to the ways in which the violence of such masculinities harms people of differing gender identities, without at the same time inadvertently reinforcing the messaging on male victimhood used by Men's Rights movements.

### **Politicized religion and patriarchal backlash**

The political use of religious doctrine to assert and maintain patriarchal masculinities (and norms in general) has a long history; such politicized religion seems ever more central to the patriarchal backlash discussed earlier. The Mexico City feminist convening in 2019 emphasized the degree to which "the human rights of women, transgender, and gender non-conforming identities, adolescents, and girls are routinely violated and the target of intense attacks by religious institutions and authoritarian governments."<sup>175</sup> A 2020 study warns that "[a]ntifeminist mobilisation is growing in the United Nations", led "by a coalition of certain post- Soviet, Catholic, and Islamic states".<sup>176</sup> The study notes that uniting "them is the aim of restoring the 'natural family' and opposing 'gender ideology'", and that their ideological commitment to patriarchal 'family values' draws heavily on religious teachings, both Christian and Islamic.<sup>177</sup> Elsewhere, this commitment is also reinforced by appeals to Hindu and Buddhist doctrine.<sup>178</sup>

The significance of religiosity in linking social conservatism with political authoritarianism, and the gender dimensions of such links, merits closer examination. MenEngage Alliance's own work has acknowledged that "[s]pirituality, religion or faith-based beliefs significantly influence the lives of more than 85 percent

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<sup>172</sup> Nascimento, Mafu, A. P. Uziel and J. G. Hernandez. 2018. "Young Men in Juvenile Detention Centers in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil: Gender, Sexuality, Masculinity and Health Implications." *Cad Saude Publica* 34(2):1-7.

<sup>173</sup> Ricardo, Christine and Gary Barker. 2008. "Men, Masculinities, Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Violence: A Literature Review and Call for Action." Washington DC: Promundo and MenEngage.

<sup>174</sup> Edström, Jerker, Christopher Dolan, Thea Shahrokh and Onen David. 2016. "Therapeutic Activism: Men of Hope Refugee Association Uganda Breaking the Silence over Male Rape in Conflict-Related Sexual Violence." Brighton, UK and Kampala, Uganda: Institute of Development Studies and Refugee Law Project.

<sup>175</sup> Anon 2019. p8

<sup>176</sup> Cupać, Jelena and Irem Ebetürk. 2020. "The Personal Is Global Political: The Antifeminist Backlash in the United Nations." *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 22(4):1-13. p1

<sup>177</sup> Ibid. p1

<sup>178</sup> Vanaik, Achin. 2018. "India's Two Hegemonies." *New Left Review* 112(July-August):29-59.



of the global population” and that such “belief systems and associated practices can, in turn, strongly influence believers’ norms and value systems, both positively and negatively.”<sup>179</sup> There is also some evidence to suggest the increasing influence of religious beliefs and practices. A 2019 study reports that more than half those surveyed in Indonesia (83%), the Philippines (58%) and India (54%) believe that religion has a bigger impact on their nation today than it did 20 years ago.<sup>180</sup> Seven-in-ten or more people in all three of these countries say religion is very important in their lives. Meanwhile, a 65 percent majority in Nigeria thinks religion plays a more important role in their country, while 60 percent of Kenyans say the same. Notably, large majorities in these countries (96% and 93%, respectively) say religion is very important in their lives.

Such reports of the importance of religion do not necessarily suggest an increased commitment to either social conservatism or political authoritarianism. The meanings of religious teaching and practice vary greatly, not least with respect to gender roles and relations. MenEngage Alliance itself has noted that “an increasing engagement between gender equality organizations and activists and faith-based communities or leaders has become common.”<sup>181</sup> Through this engagement it is clear to Alliance members that, “[w]hile a critical evaluation of the roles played by faith-based belief systems in shaping gender norms is essential, it is also important to work with people of faith to promote positive interpretations of spiritual, faith and religious values, supportive of parity and justice.”<sup>182</sup>

But it is also clear that such gender transformative work with religious leaders and organizations must take account of the multiple roles played by such organizations in people’s lives, and what this means in terms of their potential for politicization. In many urban settings in both the Global South and Global North, religious organizations have stepped into the void left by the neoliberal State and its withdrawal from “social provisioning”; in doing so, religious organizations provide a range of social welfare and health services as well as a ‘home’ within which to nurture both social solidarity and political grievance. In this way, religious organizations develop a social legitimacy, as a foundation on which to mobilize communities around particular political visions and programs. Evidence of such dynamics has been documented in a number of and diverse countries, including Tunisia,<sup>183</sup> India,<sup>184</sup> Thailand, the UK<sup>185</sup> and the USA<sup>186</sup>.

Trends in religiosity must be understood then in relation to the political agendas of organized religious groups, whose institutional arrangements and ideological commitments give them the character of social

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<sup>179</sup> MenEngage. 2016. "Faith-Based Approaches to Transforming Masculinities for Gender Justice & Equality: A Two-Day Consultation Summary Report." Washington DC: MenEngage Alliance. p4

<sup>180</sup> Poushter, Jacob and Janell Fetterolf. 2019. "How People around the World View Religion’s Role in Their Countries." *Pew Research Center: Global Attitudes & Trends*. Retrieved: September 12, 2020 (<https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2019/04/22/how-people-around-the-world-view-religions-role-in-their-countries/>).

<sup>181</sup> MenEngage 2016. p4

<sup>182</sup> Ibid. p4

<sup>183</sup> Lamoum, Olfa. 2016. "Politics on the Margins in Tunisia: Vulnerable Young People in Douar Hicher and Ettadhamen." London: International Alert.

<sup>184</sup> Vanaik 2018.

<sup>185</sup> Jawad, Rana. 212. "The contemporary British context: social and policy profiles in relation to religion." Religion and faith-based welfare. Bristol University Press

<sup>186</sup> Cooper, Melinda. 2017. "Theology of the Social: The Rise of Faith-Based Welfare." Family Values: Between Neoliberalism and the New Social Conservatism. The MIT Press; Zone Books

movements. As Davis suggests, “populist Islam and Pentecostal Christianity (and in Bombay, the cult of Shivaji) occupy a social space analogous to that of early twentieth-century socialism and anarchism.”<sup>187</sup> The gender politics of such movements vary, historically and geographically, but recent years have seen increasing a resurgent alignment between socially conservative religious movements and authoritarian political forces, centered on a patriarchal conception of the social order. The campaign against “gender ideology” championed by Orbán, Bolsonaro and other authoritarian leaders was initiated by Catholic conservatives in the 1990s, who argued that the concept of ‘gender’ undermines the traditional, heteronormative, and patriarchal family structure, and thereby the social stability of the nation.

Studies of ethnonationalist parties and forces in many parts of the world highlight the use of religion in connecting male supremacy with white/majority supremacist ideologies. The figure of the male protector, who must defend the Hindu nation and its families from the sexualized threat of the Muslim ‘invader’, is a central motif of Hindutva. This is the Hindu nationalist ideology of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and of the right-wing, Hindu nationalist, paramilitary volunteer organization the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), which provides the organizational support for his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Commenting on far-right political forces in Europe, Fekete notes that the “most successful hard right political crusaders against Islam and Muslims, such as Matteo Salvini in Italy and Viktor Orbán in Hungary, claim to be staunch defenders of Europe’s Christian tradition,” and that “[j]ust like Bolsonaro in Brazil, who has declared that he is fulfilling the mission of God, Salvini is attempting to mould an aggressive Catholicism around a hyper-masculinised personality cult.”<sup>188</sup>

That the authoritarian political turn in many countries is drawing on a religiously-grounded patriarchal social conservatism is clear and threatens a broad progressive agenda. As Beinart suggests:<sup>189</sup>

*at stake are advances made to legalize same-sex marriage, achieve gender wage parity, access contraception and abortion services, balance care work with greater feminization of the economy, and end discrimination of LGBTQI persons. Importantly, challenging the far-right’s war on gender is also central to advancing racial justice, ensuring the rights of refugees and migrants, and promoting inclusive societies.*

This threat must, then, be of central concern to progressive forces, such as MenEngage Alliance in its efforts to support women’s rights and LGBTQIA+ movements. Of particular concern must be the ways in which this religiously-grounded patriarchal social conservatism deepens the normalization of misogyny, homo/trans-phobia and violence against heterosexual, cisgendered women and LGBTQIA+ communities.

### **Implications for work with men and boys on transforming patriarchal masculinities**

The increase in misogynistic public speech, not least from authoritarian political leaders, challenges organizations doing gender transformative work with men and boys to speak out more publicly against this normalization of misogyny. So too is it urgent to develop contextually-specific analyses of and responses to men’s rights organizing, both at the level of media communications and public messaging, and in terms of working directly with men and boys to support them in rejecting Men’s Rights propaganda.

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<sup>187</sup> Davis, Mike. 2004. “Planet of the Slums: Urban Involution and the Informal Proletariat.” *New Left Review* 26(March-April):5-34. p30

<sup>188</sup> Fekete, Liz. 2019. “White Supremacy, Racial Patriarchy: Two Sides of the Same Coin.” *Verso Blog*. Retrieved: September 8, 2020 (<https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/4420-white-supremacy-racial-patriarchy-two-sides-of-the-same-coin>).

<sup>189</sup> Beinart, Peter. 2019. “The New Authoritarians Are Waging War on Women.” *The Atlantic* January-February.

As a community of practice for such work, the MenEngage Alliance has an important role to play in helping its members to generate and share lessons and tools that can enhance such responses to Men's Rights movements. Part of this work will also involve continuing to build relationships and dialog with religious groups and leaders, to enlist their support in countering misogyny and patriarchal masculinities.

As this forgoing overview of social contexts suggests, any work to challenge the normalization of patriarchal social relations, and the gender-based violence associated with them, must analyze trends in "harmful gender norms" in the context of a resurgent social conservatism, often religiously informed, which is itself harnessed by specific political forces in particular economic conditions. This is to say that a social movement perspective on the problem of "harmful social norms" is needed, both in order to better understand such social conservatism in terms of the dynamics of regressive social movements and to better identify the opportunities to build coalitions of progressive forces to counter them.

### 1.1.4 Technological contexts

*The technological affordances of social media are especially well suited to the amplification of new articulations of aggrieved manhood.*<sup>190</sup>

The political, economic and social contexts discussed above have all been shaped by, and in turn shaped, the pace and nature of technological change, especially in relation to digital communications. As this section will discuss, rapid technological change is affecting expressions and experiences of patriarchal masculinities. This means that gender transformative work with men and boys must develop a better understanding of the technological contexts in which it is operating, and both the challenges and opportunities created by technological change.

#### **Media and communication technologies and patriarchal masculinities**

Anti-patriarchal work with men and boys has long had an interest in the role of media and communication technologies in maintaining patriarchal norms, and especially its role in socializing young men into patriarchal masculinities.<sup>191</sup> Much of this work has focused on issues of media literacy in relation to the objectification of women and girls across many forms of media (from TV shows, to music lyrics, to advertising campaigns), and the role played by representations of violence (in movies, TV and computer gaming) in desensitizing boys and young men to patriarchal violence.<sup>192</sup>

More recently, gender justice advocates have highlighted the impact of digital technologies in deepening the marginalization of women, girls and LGBTIQ individuals. In 2019, the number of internet users worldwide stood at 4.13 billion, which means that more than half of the global population is currently connected to the world wide web.<sup>193</sup> The number of smartphone users worldwide today surpasses three

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<sup>190</sup> Ging, Debbie. 2017. "Alphas, Betas, and Incels:Theorizing the Masculinities of the Manosphere." *Men and Masculinities*:1-20. p16

<sup>191</sup> Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media. 2020. "If He Can See It, Will He Be It?" Emmitsburg, MD: Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, Promundo-US and the Kering Foundation.

<sup>192</sup> Larasi, Marai. 2012. "Media as a Site to Prevent Violence against Girls and Women." Pp. 1-12 in UN Women In cooperation with ESCAP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO Expert Group Meeting: Prevention of violence against women and girls Bangkok, Thailand 17-20 September 2012.

<sup>193</sup> <https://www.statista.com/topics/1145/internet-usage-worldwide/>

billion and is forecast to further grow by several hundred million in the next few years.<sup>194</sup> But gender-based barriers continue to constrain women's access to and uptake of this digital connectivity. The Association for Progressive Communications, in its recent submission to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women, notes that "[w]hether in terms of access, affordability, meaningful connectivity or digital literacy, women's overall participation in the digital space remains disproportionately limited."<sup>195</sup> The Web Foundation reports that men remain 21 percent more likely to be online than women, rising to 52 percent in the world's least developed countries (LDCs).<sup>196</sup> Once online, research suggests that women are 30-50 percent less likely than men to use Internet access to increase income or participate in public life.<sup>197</sup> Such barriers continue to slow progress toward SDG 9, which set a target of universal and affordable access to the internet in least developed countries by 2020, and the "leave no-one behind" commitment of Agenda 2030 more generally.

At the same time, as a medium of both interpersonal communication and public discourse, the internet both reinforces and expands the operations of oppressive behaviors and hierarchies. In 2015, the UN Broadband Commission reported that women were 27 times more likely than men to be targeted by tech-related violence.<sup>198</sup> A 2018 report by OHCHR emphasizes that women and girls "face online forms and manifestations of violence that are part of the continuum of multiple, recurring and interrelated forms of gender-based violence against women."<sup>199</sup> This experience of online violence and digital exclusion is also affected by "intersectional forms of discrimination based on a number of other factors, such as race, ethnicity, caste, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, abilities, age, class, income, culture, religion, and urban or rural setting."<sup>200</sup> As the report continues:<sup>201</sup>

*It is therefore important to acknowledge that the Internet is being used in a broader environment of widespread and systemic structural discrimination and gender-based violence against women and girls, which frame their access to and use of the Internet and other ICT. Emerging forms of ICT have facilitated new types of gender-based violence and gender inequality in access to technologies, which hinder women's and girls' full enjoyment of their human rights and their ability to achieve gender equality.*

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<sup>194</sup> <https://www.statista.com/statistics/330695/number-of-smartphone-users-worldwide/>

<sup>195</sup> APC. 2020. "Covid-19 and the Increase of Domestic Violence against Women: A Submission from the Association for Progressive Communications to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, Its Causes and Consequences." Association for Progressive Communications.

<sup>196</sup> <https://webfoundation.org/2020/03/the-gender-gap-in-internet-access-using-a-women-centred-method/>

<sup>197</sup> Web Foundation. 2015. "Women's Rights Online: Translating Access into Empowerment." Geneva: World Wide Web Foundation.

<sup>198</sup> UN Broadband Commission. 2015. "Cyber Violence against Women and Girls: A World-Wide Wake-up Call." New York: UN Broadband Commission for Digital Development Working Group on Broadband and Gender.

<sup>199</sup> OHCHR. 2018. "Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, Its Causes and Consequences on Online Violence against Women and Girls from a Human Rights Perspective." Human Rights Council Thirty-eighth session, 18 June–6 July 2018. Agenda item 3: Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development. Geneva, Switzerland: UN Human Rights Council. p5

<sup>200</sup> Ibid. p8

<sup>201</sup> Ibid. p5

A growing body of evidence shows that the impacts of digital misogyny and online violence are limiting women's participation in public and political life.<sup>202</sup> Recent research with college-aged women participating in online political discussions in Colombia, Kenya and Indonesia found that they experienced similar types of violence including insults and hate speech, embarrassment and reputational risk, physical threats, and sexualized misrepresentation.<sup>203</sup> The OHCHR report notes that:<sup>204</sup>

*Women human rights defenders, journalists and politicians are directly targeted, threatened, harassed or even killed for their work. They receive online threats, generally of a misogynistic nature, often sexualized and specifically gendered. The violent nature of these threats often leads to self-censorship.*

Not only do digital misogyny and online violence have political effects; they serve specific political purposes and interests. Recognizing that digital technologies facilitate not merely interpersonal communication but political speech and action means that the political forces at work on the internet must be acknowledged.

"The most vehement and explicit attempt to protect a masculinist world-view is the contemporary loose coalition of social and political movements around men's rights and father's rights, with shared roots and overlaps with the alt-right, in the Anglosphere and Europe," Nicholas and Agius make clear.<sup>205</sup> This loose coalition is often referred to as the "manosphere", denoting the online ecology of sites, memes and message-boards focused on male insecurities and resentments whose content is frequently deeply misogynistic. Murdoch notes that "[m]anosphere ideas have snowballed into an ideology that has taken on a life of its own, and for some it has served as a route into wider far-right politics."<sup>206</sup> With reference to the increase proliferation of far-right messaging and memes online under the category of the "alt right",<sup>207</sup> Dibranco emphasizes the deeply concerning trend that "misogyny is not only a significant part of the Alt Right, it's the 'gateway drug' for the recruitment of disaffected White men into racist communities."<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> <https://www.apc.org/en>

<sup>203</sup> NDI. 2019. "Tweets That Chill: Analyzing Online Violence against Women in Politics." Washington, DC: National Democratic Institute.

<sup>204</sup> OHCHR. 2018. p8

<sup>205</sup> Nicholas, L. and C. Agius. 2018. *The Persistence of Global Masculinism: Discourse, Gender and Neo-Colonial Re-Articulations of Violence*. Chan, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan. p34

<sup>206</sup> Murdoch, Simon. 2019. "Why Understanding the Uk Anti-Feminist Movement Is Vital to Countering the Far Right." *Huffington Post*. Retrieved: February 26, 2019 ([https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/anti-feminist-movement-far-right\\_uk\\_5c6ae7cae4b01757c36e8b77](https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/anti-feminist-movement-far-right_uk_5c6ae7cae4b01757c36e8b77)). p2

<sup>207</sup> The term "Alt-Right", an abbreviation of alternative right, is a loosely connected far-right, white nationalist movement based in the United States. A largely online phenomenon, the alt-right originated in the U.S. during the 2010s, although it has since established a presence in various other countries.

<sup>208</sup> Dibranco, Alex. 2017. "Mobilizing Misogyny." Boston, MA: Political Research Associates. p15

The extremist violence of misogyny itself has become evident with the increasingly serious incidents of violence that have been committed by young men predominantly in the United States and Canada who self-identify as incels (involuntary celibates).<sup>209</sup> As a recent study emphasizes:<sup>210</sup>

*While incels have not yet formed organized violent groups or cells, the existing attacks have been premeditated, politically motivated and perpetrated violence against civilians. These factors clearly designate incel attacks as a form of terrorism and require incel ideology to be explored as a form of violent extremism.*

Central to incel ideology are misogynistic notions of gender roles and shared beliefs about heterosexuality, male supremacy and the need to violently reestablish 'traditional' gender norms. Online communities, meeting on message boards and in other internet venues, validate this misogynistic world view and encourage direct action in pursuit of their goals. The term "ideological masculinity" has been coined to name this ideological commitment to misogyny and male supremacy, and to insist on it being recognized as itself a form of violent extremism.<sup>211</sup> Misogynist online groups, from men's rights activists, to 'pick up artist' communities and incels, have increased in number and size over recent years. The online message board "subreddit r/incels" had roughly 40,000 members when it was shut down in 2017 for inciting violence against women. Recent research highlights the evolution of the manosphere. A 2020 study analyzing 28.8 million posts from six forums and 51 subreddits reports that:<sup>212</sup>

*milder and older communities, such as Pick Up Artists and Men's Rights Activists, are giving way to more extremist ones like Incels and Men Going Their Own Way, with a substantial migration of active users. Moreover, our analysis suggests that these newer communities are more toxic and misogynistic than the older ones.*

Indeed, this misogynistic trend has been recognized across diverse expressions of violent extremism. As Zimmerman et al make clear:<sup>213</sup>

*Incels represent just one end of a spectrum of extremist groups spanning a vast range of political ideologies, all united by militant misogyny. These groups range from white-supremacists and neo-Nazis to Al Qaeda and the Islamic State. Incels are just one aspect of a violent ideological masculinity, an ideology that is growing.*

### **Platform capitalism and social injustice**

Together with this important emphasis on the ways in which an ideological commitment to misogyny and male supremacy is manifest online, it is also important to understand the logic of power, exploitation and oppression organizing the operations of internet platforms themselves. There is a growing recognition that the ownership structures and network effects of "platform capitalism" concentrate power in

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<sup>209</sup> Hoffman, Bruce, Jacob Ware and Ezra Shapiro. 2

<sup>210</sup> Zimmerman, Shannon, Luisa Ryan and David Duriesmith. 2018. "Recognizing the Violent Extremist Ideology of 'Incels'." *Women in International Security Policy Brief*. Washington DC: Women in International Security. p2

<sup>211</sup> Roose, Joshua. 2018. "'Ideological Masculinity' That Drives Violence against Women Is a Form of Violent Extremism." *The Conversation*.

<sup>212</sup> Ribeiro, Manoel Horta, Jeremy Blackburn, Barry Bradlyn, Emiliano De Cristofaro, Gianluca Stringhini, Summer Long, Stephanie Greenberg and Savvas Zannettou. 2020. "The Evolution of the Manosphere across the Web." *Computers and Society* 00(00):1-12. p1

<sup>213</sup> Zimmerman, Shannon, Luisa Ryan and David Duriesmith. 2018. p3

unprecedented ways. The world's richest corporations (including Google, Amazon and Facebook) have built their business empires on digital platforms, marketing them as open, innovative and liberating.

Yet, as Easterling suggests, a "platform celebrating its broad reach, open access, and free circulation of information within an internet of things may also become a network concentrating authority in an organization with a highly centralized disposition."<sup>214</sup> A 2018 report by DfID on *Doing Development in a Digital World* warns that the "benefits of the internet are also being accompanied by new risks of harmful concentration and monopoly, rising inequality, and state and corporate use of digital technologies to control rather than empower citizens."<sup>215</sup> The lockdown measures imposed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic heightened awareness not only of the centrality of digital technologies to the functioning of everyday life in many societies, but also the vulnerabilities this creates to both State and corporate control and surveillance.<sup>216</sup>

At best, this concentration of power results in a new paternalism, in which the freedoms and limitations of online speech, which increasingly is the medium of political life in many societies, are determined by platform content moderators rather than the rights of the citizen, or indeed the sovereignty of political institutions. At worst, the very possibility of rational public debate and decision-making is undermined by manipulation and exploitation of communication infrastructures, and the increasingly hidden nature of decision-making by automated systems and their algorithms. As a 2018 report on the challenges of governance and accountability in the contemporary era makes clear, in "the increasingly noisy and complex digital landscape, the nature of political dialogue is open to new forms of manipulation."<sup>217</sup> The term agnotology has been coined to refer to this use of manipulation to sow disinformation and create doubt and suspicion of previously accepted facts. As has been argued, "[w]hether we're talking about the erasure of history or the undoing of scientific knowledge, agnotology is a tool of oppression by the powerful."<sup>218</sup>

Such a tool is designed into the commercial logic of platform capitalism. Where communication technologies used to be understood in terms of their capacity to create and share meaning, the digital communications of platform capitalism are fundamentally not about the articulation of meaning, but keeping our attention in order to extract and exploit our data. As Seymour explains:<sup>219</sup>

*On social media platforms, the incentive is to constantly produce more information: a perpetual motion machine, harnessed to passions of which the machine knows nothing. This production is not for the purpose of making meaning. It is for the purpose of producing effects on users that keep us hooked.*

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<sup>214</sup> Easterling, Keller. 2014. *Extrastatecraft: The Power of Infrastructure Space*. London and New York: Verso.

<sup>215</sup> DfID. 2018. "Digital Strategy 2018-2020: Doing Development in a Digital World." London: Department for International Development.

<sup>216</sup> Zuboff, Shoshana. 2019. *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*. New York: PublicAffairs.

<sup>217</sup> McGee, Rosie, Duncan Edwards, Colin Anderson, Hannah Hudson and Francesca Feruglio. 2018. "Appropriating Technology for Accountability: Messages from Making All Voices Count." *Making All Voices Count Research Report*. Brighton: Institute of Development Studies. p23

<sup>218</sup> boyd, danah. 2019. "Agnotology and Epistemological Fragmentation." *Data & Society Research Institute*. Retrieved: August 3, 2020 (<https://points.datasociety.net/agnotology-and-epistemological-fragmentation-56aa3c509c6b>).

<sup>219</sup> Seymour, Richard. 2019. *The Twittering Machine*. London: The Indigo Press. p160

If the “algorithm is there to keep users glued to the screen with content likely to be addictive,”<sup>220</sup> the evidence suggests that the more provocative the content, the more addictive it is. Whether provoking outrage or delight, misogyny and other forms of oppressive online speech “keep users glued to the screen.” In 2017, one analysis found that Trump alone was worth about \$2.5 billion to Twitter, a fifth of its share value at the time.<sup>221</sup> The proliferation of conspiracy memes and conspiracist thinking online is the product of this commercial logic and the crisis of democratic decision-making and accountability it has helped to fuel. For Jameson, conspiracy “is the poor person’s cognitive mapping in the postmodern age,”<sup>222</sup> an age characterized, since the onset of neoliberal economic reforms from the early 1980s onwards, by a technocratic hollowing out of democratic processes.<sup>223</sup>

The patriarchal masculinities of the manosphere have thrived in this digital media environment. The business models of platforms such as Twitter and Facebook are organized by a “competitive structure, pitting all against all in a ceaseless struggle for likes” which “creates a culture of social Darwinism in which the ‘strongest’ prevail; and its consequent promotion of hierarchies, or personality cults, inhibits egalitarian discourse while inciting would-be Führers.”<sup>224</sup> Equally, the conspiracism fostered by platform capitalism has found one of its clearest expressions in the “red pill” meme, whose cross-cultural appeal can, in part, be explained by the global success of The Matrix movies. This “red pill” meme encourages men to see through the illusions of contemporary life.<sup>225</sup>

*Taking the blue pill means switching off and living a life of delusion; taking the red pill means becoming enlightened to life’s ugly truths. The Red Pill philosophy purports to awaken men to feminism’s misandry and brainwashing, and is the key concept that unites all of these communities.*

Ging notes that although the “red pill” meme originated on a relatively obscure online forum (as the subreddit, r/TRP,) it has since proliferated into other domains of the manosphere, including pickup artist and men’s rights forums, going so far as to suggest that its r/TRP’s underlying philosophy functions to “generate consensus and belonging among the manosphere’s divergent elements.”<sup>226</sup> As Seymour suggests, “[r]edpilling is, for many of its users, potent self-medication, better than any combination of cognitive behavioural therapy and prescription drugs.”<sup>227</sup>

The masculine coding of the red vs blue pill is also clear; “in the alt-right sphere ‘blue pill’ is a term that is usually attached only to men portrayed as spineless, desperate and sexually unappealing to women - all traits antithetical to most understandings of hegemonic masculinity”, Kelly emphasizes.<sup>228</sup> The

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<sup>220</sup> Ibid. p169

<sup>221</sup> Ibid. p127

<sup>222</sup> Jameson, Frederic. 1990. "Cognitive Mapping." Pp. 347-60 in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by C. Nelson and L. Grossberg. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press.

<sup>223</sup> Brown, Wendy. 2019. *In the Ruins of Neoliberalism: The Rise of Antidemocratic Politics in the West*. New York: Columbia University Press.

<sup>224</sup> Eagleton, Oliver. 2019. "Mind Forged Manacles." *New Left Review* 120(November-December):161-68. p164

<sup>225</sup> Ging, Debbie. 2017. "Alphas, Betas, and Incels:Theorizing the Masculinities of the Manosphere." *Men and Masculinities*:1-20. p3

<sup>226</sup> Ibid. p8

<sup>227</sup> Seymour, Richard. 2019. p167

<sup>228</sup> Kelly, Annie. 2017. "The Alt-Right: Reactionary Rehabilitation for White Masculinity: Us Alt-Right Extremism Is a Logical Consequence of Mainstream Neo-Conservatism." *Soundings: A journal of politics and culture* 66(Summer):68-78. p74



manosphere is constructed around a narrative of feminism's oppression of men, and a rejection of the evidence of men's patriarchal oppression of women. In this manner, the manosphere has helped to foster a transnational ecology of aggrieved male entitlement and virulent misogyny, so central to the Men's Rights activism discussed in the previous section. The manosphere's loose networks, in Ging's formulation, come together around stories and feelings of men's "personal suffering to build [an] affective consensus about an allegedly collective, gendered experience, namely men's position in the social hierarchy as a result of feminism."<sup>229</sup>

The misogynistic anger and conspiracy thinking that proliferate online, reinforced as they are by the commercial logic of platform capitalism, pose significant threats to the work of gender justice movements. The appeals such movements make to the 'facts' of gender justice are undermined by the "crisis of knowing" discussed above. As Doctorow makes clear, "we're not living through a crisis about what is true, we're living through a crisis about how we know whether something is true. We're not disagreeing about facts, we're disagreeing about epistemology."<sup>230</sup> The business model of platform capitalism is organized around an attention economy, in which the extraction and exploitation of data relies on fostering a screen 'addiction', via the emotional intensities of anger and resentment, easily mobilized for patriarchal purposes. As Seymour emphasizes, the masculinism of social media platforms is not only explicit in misogynistic speech but also implicit in their design.<sup>231</sup>

*For they have created a machinery whose natural hero is the antisocial outsider, the hacker with no ties, the troll, the spammer. They have created a regime of competitive individualism in which perplexity and paranoia are a constant state of being.*

### **Political organizing and state surveillance**

At the same time, it is also true that digital technologies have opened up unprecedented opportunities for transnational activism and social justice movement building, needed now more than ever in the midst of the constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. From #MeToo, to #BlackLivesMatter, to #GreenNewDeal, digital technologies have enabled political education and organizing across a range of social justice issues. That online educating and organizing can have powerful and immediate offline effects was clear in the protests that swept anti-democratic leaders from power in 2010-12, sometimes characterized as the Facebook revolutions. Equally, the global success of the Occupy movement owed much to its use of digital communication technologies. The fact that platform capitalism is so oppressive should not detract from the fact that the digital tools and protocols used by corporate platforms can also be applied for liberatory purposes. As Eagleton writes:<sup>232</sup>

*In the conjunctural crisis of late capitalism, socialist principles have re-asserted their relevance. Our immediate task is to harness the affective energy of those principles and channel it through digital and non-digital mediums, instead of abandoning the former as a hopelessly corrupted domain.*

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<sup>229</sup> Ging 2017. p16

<sup>230</sup> Doctorow, Cory. 2019. "Danah Boyd Explains the Connection between the Epistemological Crisis and the Rise of Far-Right Conspiratorial Thinking." *BoingBoing*. Retrieved: May 15, 2019 (<https://boingboing.net/2019/05/07/production-of-ignorance.html>).

<sup>231</sup> Seymour 2019. p154

<sup>232</sup> Eagleton, Oliver. 2019. "Mind Forged Manacles." *New Left Review* 120(November-December):161-68. p168

But this activism and organizing is shadowed by the enhanced infrastructure of surveillance afforded by these same technologies, which serve as a reminder that digital security must be a priority for the communication channels used by global social change networks such as the MenEngage Alliance.

### **Implications for work with men and boys on transforming patriarchal masculinities**

The growing influence of media and online space on all aspects of everyday life and political debate, including expressions and experiences of patriarchal masculinities, means that the feminist systems change agenda is necessarily concerned with gender transformative work on media systems. Gender transformative work with men and boys can contribute to this agenda in a number of different ways, in solidarity with feminist and LGBTQIA+ movements. This should include continuing to develop and expand media literacy work, especially with boys and young men, to help them understand the patriarchal effects of sexist representations of women and girls, as well as the desensitizing effects of media portrayals of violence.

There is also an urgent need to develop more contextually-specific analyses of and responses to digital gender-based violence and men's involvement in the manosphere, including strategies for building alternate online community-building spaces for young men in particular, which can support young men in rejecting the misogynistic messaging they are often surrounded with online. Such alternative online communities can also become spaces for building trusting relationships of 'knowing', by sharing factually-based peer knowledge to counter the deliberate spread of false information, not least in relation to the local facts of gender inequalities. In its efforts to act in solidarity with and accountability to the radical systems change agenda feminist and LGBTQIA+ movements, MenEngage Alliance should also identify ways in which it can contribute to movement critiques of the gender injustices produced by platform capitalism. In participating in online organizing to call for a radical overhaul of platform capitalism and mechanisms of State surveillance of civil society, MenEngage Alliance must pay greater attention to security and safety issues within its own digital communications with members and partners.

## **1.1.5 Operational contexts**

*Most male engagement programming focuses at the individual level—with some work also being done at the community level—without addressing the broader structures of patriarchy within which individuals and relationships operate.<sup>233</sup>*

### **Gender transformative work with men and boys - for whose sake?**

The expansion of programming which self-identifies as “engaging” men and boys in work for gender justice has been significant over the last two and half decades. One indicator for the growth of this field of work is the emergence and expansion of MenEngage Alliance itself. In 2009, MenEngage organized the 1st Global Symposium on *Engaging Men and Boys in Gender Equality* in Rio de Janeiro, which drew over 400 activists, researchers, and practitioners from nearly 80 countries. Five years later, the 2nd MenEngage Global Symposium in New Delhi attracted over 1200 participants from 95 countries. At the same time the strengthening of the efforts, programs and political vision is also emerged significantly, which is evident from the Delhi Declaration and Call to Action from the 2nd Global Symposium where the participants

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<sup>233</sup> ICRW. 2018. "Gender Equity and Male Engagement: It Only Works When Everyone Plays." Washington DC: International Center for Research on Women. p92

affirmed their shared belief that *“achieving gender justice requires engaging men and boys for the benefit of women and girls, men and boys themselves, people of all sexual orientations and gender identities, informed by feminist and human rights principles, organisations, and movements and in a spirit of solidarity.”*<sup>234</sup>

Different terms are used to name this field of work, both by those working within it as well as those who interact with it: from “male involvement” to “engaging men and boys” to “men and masculinities work”. But it is perhaps more straightforward to refer to this field of work in terms of its stated purpose, which is to achieve gender justice. What unites this disparate body of work and its diverse components as a self-conscious “field” is the fundamental goal of dismantling patriarchal systems by working with men and boys to transform patriarchal masculinities, operating at individual, institutional and ideological levels.

There remain long-standing tensions within gender transformative work with men and boys, however, relating to the guiding rationale for the field itself. Do we work with men and boys to challenge patriarchal systems for the sake of those most oppressed by gender injustices (i.e. cisgendered, heterosexual women, girls and LGBTQIA+ communities) or should this work also be concerned with the harms men and boys suffer from patriarchal masculinities? A recent study undertaken by the International Center for Research on Women, based on key informant interviews with researchers, implementers, and funders who are working in the field of “male engagement” in Latin America, Southeast Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, concludes that the “dilemma lies in avoiding the premise that men and boys ought to be engaged in women’s empowerment solely or predominantly from an instrumental perspective, serving only the interests of women and girls.”<sup>235</sup> Instead, the study found “[m]any participants independently express[ing] support for an alternative framing with a larger and more inclusive goal: engaging men as partners—stakeholders, co-beneficiaries, and change agents—in working towards gender equality and gender equity.”<sup>236</sup>

This language of “co-beneficiaries” builds on that used in the background paper prepared for the 2nd MenEngage Global Symposium in New Delhi in 2014. Here, it was suggested that the framing of men as allies or partners to women in the latter’s struggle for gender justice “does not fully capture men’s role or stake in gender equality” by neglecting “the ways in which men’s lives also improve with greater gender equality, including with equal rights and empowerment for women.”<sup>237</sup> Instead, the paper urges “a more accurate reflection of the range and depth of gains from gender equality” by insisting on men’s roles “as stakeholders and co-beneficiaries in advancing gender-equality.”<sup>238</sup>

Key informant interviews conducted for this strategic planning process suggest, however, continuing concerns about what this emphasis on men and boys as “co-beneficiaries” means in practice for how the field of gender transformative work with men and boys operates, and understands its relationship and responsibilities to broader gender justice movements. The MenEngage Global Symposium 2014 background paper, cited above, itself notes that “there are concerns that the work with men and boys has

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<sup>234</sup> <http://menengage.org/resources/delhi-declaration-call-action/>

<sup>235</sup> ICRW. 2018. p13

<sup>236</sup> Ibid. p19

<sup>237</sup> Ricardo, Christine. 2014. “Men, Masculinities, and Changing Power: A Discussion Paper on Engaging Men in Gender Equality from Beijing 1995 to 2015.” MenEngage Alliance and UN Women. p23

<sup>238</sup> Ibid. p24

become a goal in and of itself and that some interventions with men fail to adequately challenge patriarchy and power imbalances in relationships between women and men.”<sup>239</sup> Furthermore, the paper notes that while “there is growing recognition of the need to engage men and boys in challenging patriarchal systems and culture,” there is also “concern that men’s involvement in these movements reproduces patterns of men’s power and privilege and threatens women’s leadership of the movement.”<sup>240</sup>

A more trenchant version of this critique has been articulated more recently by the Coalition of Feminists for Social Change (COFEM). In a 2017 paper, COFEM warns of “a parallel system” emerging, of “male engagement campaigns, programmes, organisations and networks that, although allied theoretically to feminist principles, stand largely independent of the women’s movement.”<sup>241</sup> In specific national contexts, this critique has extended to a concern that efforts to engage men are distorting the mission of the gender justice movement, leading to what has been called the “masculinization of gender justice work”. In research on such work with men and boys in the Netherlands, van Huis found that what started as a program focused on reaching out to and connecting with men in order to enlist their support for women’s empowerment over time became focused on men’s own vulnerabilities, to the point where some projects dropped their goal of women’s empowerment altogether.<sup>242</sup> The International Rescue Committee designed its Engaging Men through Accountable Practice (EMAP), a one-year GBV prevention program developed for humanitarian settings, partly in response to its evaluation of a Male Involvement Project in Liberia, which found that discussions became too male-focused and that patriarchal power showed up, unchallenged, in group meetings.<sup>243</sup>

A 2017 study identified similar dynamics in transnational spaces and processes, concluding that funding mechanisms are (re)producing inequalities among NGOs in the field and that many feminist activists and leaders have specific concerns about the impact of efforts to engage men on existing funding and political space for women’s rights and empowerment. Moreover, it found that the framing of efforts to engage men and boys increasingly emphasizes men’s gendered vulnerabilities rather than women’s rights and empowerment.<sup>244</sup> Concerns around this work were further exposed in July 2019, with the publication of a systematic review on interventions involving men in supporting SRHR by WHO. It showed that, of the interventions reviewed, only eight percent aimed to challenge unequal gender power relations and the majority showed inconclusive results.<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> Ibid. p43

<sup>240</sup> Ibid. p43

<sup>241</sup> COFEM. 2017. “How a Lack of Accountability Undermines Work to Address Violence against Women and Girls.” *Feminist Perspectives on Addressing Violence Against Women and Girls Paper No. 1*. Coalition of Feminists for Social Change. p5

<sup>242</sup> van Huis, Iris. 2014. “Better Men? Gendered Culturalized Citizenship in Male Emancipation Projects in the Netherlands.” Pp. 137-58 in *Masculinities in a Global Era*, edited by J. Gelfer. New York: Springer.

<sup>243</sup> [https://www.fsnnetwork.org/sites/default/files/IRC-EMAP-Introductory-Guide-High-Res%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.fsnnetwork.org/sites/default/files/IRC-EMAP-Introductory-Guide-High-Res%20(1).pdf)

<sup>244</sup> Leek, Cliff. 2017. “At What Cost? Funding and Political Space to Engage Men in Global Feminist Activism.” Doctor of Philosophy, The Graduate School, Stony Brook University, New York State.

<sup>245</sup> Ruane-McAteer, Eimear, Avni Amin, Jennifer Hanratty, Fiona Lynn, Kyrsten Corbijn van Willenswaard, Esther Reid, Rajat Khosla and Maria Lohan. 2019. “Interventions Addressing Men, Masculinities and Gender Equality in Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights: An Evidence and Gap Map and Systematic Review of Reviews.” *BMJ Global Health* 4(5):e001634.

## **Gender transformative work with men and boys - staying accountable**

The work of MenEngage Alliance over the last four years on developing Accountability Standards, and related technical support materials, has responded directly to these concerns. Further, in 2019 MenEngage Alliance together with The Equality Institute and ATHENA network launched an initiative to dig deeper into the challenges of accountability within gender transformative work with men and boys. This initiative seeks to strengthen capacities to uphold quality standards and accountable practices throughout the Alliance, and provide useful guidance for anyone working to transform patriarchal masculinities or engage men and boys, especially for those seen as leaders within this area of work. As the findings from the Evaluation make clear, and the strategic planning key informant interviews confirm, MenEngage Global Alliance's commitment to and development of work on accountability have been well received, both among the Alliance membership and by gender justice activists, leaders and donors more broadly.

Key to this work is a teasing out of the personal and organizational aspects of accountability, in terms of both practices and mechanisms. Given that collaboration with women's rights work is a stated core principle of MenEngage Alliance, then it is incumbent upon individuals and organizations within the Alliance to "demonstrate good faith and speak out [...] when there is a genuine critique advanced about the nature in which an ally, including male colleagues and partners, is undermining work to address VAWG."<sup>246</sup> The "ally" framework is significant, for the framing of men as allies to women in the struggle for gender equality is, as Casey suggests, "predicated on the notion that institutionalized oppression will persist until members of 'dominant' social groups become actively involved in ending it."<sup>247</sup> To do so in an accountable way has long been understood to mean that allies must follow the leadership of those most affected by the oppression in question. For many feminist groups and activists, accountability is first and foremost about "[p]romoting and ensuring women and girls' leadership in work" on violence and gender equality more broadly, and "[e]nsuring that male involvement efforts demonstrably empower women and girls."<sup>248</sup>

As already noted, there has been a move within the "men for gender justice" field to prefer a language of "co-beneficiary" and "stakeholder" over that of ally, in order to emphasize the benefits to men and boys themselves of their anti-patriarchal work. But the extent to which this preference signals a dilution of commitment to the principle that those most affected by patriarchal oppression must be in the leadership of movements to address it remains a question of live debate. This debate is complicated by the fact that, at the organizational level, much of the work of engaging men and boys in building gender justice is not done by dedicated male-focused organizations but by women's rights organizations themselves. Over one-third of attendees at the 2<sup>nd</sup> MenEngage Global Symposium in 2014 self-identified as representatives of women's rights groups.

Building gender equality coalitions led by those most affected by gender injustice (including people with non-normative gender identities and expressions and sexual orientations) requires a practice of accountability informed by shared analyses of gender injustice. The implication of the above is that to make progress on these issues of accountability and solidarity, there is a need not only to strengthen

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<sup>246</sup> COFEM. 2017. p8

<sup>247</sup> Casey, Erin. 2010. "Strategies for Engaging Men as Anti-Violence Allies: Implications for Ally Movements." *Advances in Social Work* 11(2):267-82. p267

<sup>248</sup> COFEM. 2017. p2

individual and organizational practices of accountability, but also to develop a shared understanding across the Alliance's membership of the transformative systems change feminist agenda to which MenEngage must be accountable. The challenge, then, is to accompany continuing work on accountability with an increased emphasis on clarifying and articulating Alliance-wide understandings of the functions of patriarchal masculinities at individual, institutional and ideological levels within gender injustice, as the basis for contributing to feminist struggles for both personal and structural transformation.

### **Gender transformative work with men and boys - staying focused on systems change**

To do so, however, will require that MenEngage Alliance address the ways in which the field of gender transformative work with men and boys itself fosters a focus on the personal aspects of "working with men and boys" to the relative neglect of strategies to transform patriarchal structures. This neglect continues to be noted. COFEM has argued that "the framing of much male involvement work focuses solely on the individual and relational aspects of masculinity rather than engaging in transformative work that challenges the fundamental assumptions upon which masculinities are constructed."<sup>249</sup> In their 2013 research study of organizations that engage men and boys in preventing violence against women and girls in Africa, Asia, Europe, Oceania, and North and South Americas, Casey et.al. similarly found an emphasis on the personal and relational and a "lack of concomitant social change strategies within the institutional, peer, and community networks in which men spend most of their time," noting that this "may undermine or directly threaten men's efforts to address gender-based violence and create equity."<sup>250</sup> A 2015 survey of gender-transformative interventions for men in health programming similarly made the recommendation that "[g]iven that gender-transformative programming for men currently includes few examples of structural interventions, this is clearly an area that needs to be bolstered in future work."<sup>251</sup> ICRW concluded its review of the "men for gender justice" field by insisting that "in order to create more sustainable gender norm transformation, simultaneous male engagement efforts need to occur at the institutional and policy levels to create more systematic and sustainable changes."<sup>252</sup>

This will require that the field of gender transformative work with men and boys reflect more intentionally and intensively on the ways in which some of the key concepts that have driven and shaped the emergence of the field have limited its capacity to develop both structural understandings of and strategies for gender justice. This includes the category of "men and boys" itself, whose unwitting homogenization of the diversity of men and boys has tended to understate the degree to which men's experiences and expressions of patriarchal masculinities are profoundly shaped by their positioning within hierarchies of power, structured not only by gender, but also by class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, age and citizenship/nationality. One effect of this homogenization has been to prioritize attention to the 'domestic' as the scene of gender transformative change in men's lives, based on the (heteronormative) assumption that what most, if not all, men share is a domestic relationship with women. Hence the emphasis on "individual and relational aspects of masculinity" to the relative neglect of "concomitant social change strategies."

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<sup>249</sup> COFEM. 2017. p6

<sup>250</sup> Casey, E. A., J. Carlson, C. Fraguera-Rios, E. Kimball, T. B. Neugut, R. M. Tolman and J. L. Edleson. 2013. "Context, Challenges, and Tensions in Global Efforts to Engage Men in the Prevention of Violence against Women: An Ecological Analysis." *Men and Masculinities* 16(2):228-51. p246

<sup>251</sup> Dworkin, Shari L., Paul J. Fleming and Christopher J. Colvin. 2015. "The Promises and Limitations of Gender-Transformative Health Programming with Men: Critical Reflections from the Field." *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 17(sup2):128-43. p133

<sup>252</sup> ICRW. 2018. p92

Equally, the framing of gender transformative strategies with men and boys in terms of transforming “harmful norms of masculinities” has tended to privilege social psychological accounts of harmful behavior over sociological analyses of male supremacy, in its interactions with other forces of oppression. That the dominant social norms paradigm has a tendency to de-politicize gender transformative work has been discussed above. Re-politicizing such work requires a recognition that structural interventions and social change strategies concerned with the distribution and exercise of social, economic and political power must necessarily be intersectional in their analysis, and focused on not merely individual but also institutional and ideological change. In turn, this suggests that “as a critical and more holistic domain, social action is inclusive of all genders’ and communities’ efforts and is therefore the point at which men’s engagement ceases to be a separate consideration or goal.”<sup>253</sup> In other words, a focus on social action for gender transformation calls into question the rationale for a separate field of “men for gender justice” work itself. The challenge for the field, and for MenEngage Alliance in particular, is to foster ways of working with men and boys on patriarchal masculinities which are grounded in a commitment to significant social change, and to the social justice struggles on which such change depends.

### **Decolonizing gender transformative work with men and boys**

Social justice struggles across the world confront the legacies of colonialism and current realities of neo-colonial economic relations between the Global North and Global South, including the aid industry itself. The feminist convening at Mexico City was clear that “[a]s systemic drivers of women’s oppression and inequality”, it is “the insidious contemporary incarnations of patriarchy, white supremacy, and colonialism” that “form an interlocking system that must be confronted.”<sup>254</sup> The radical changes called for by the feminist systems change agenda focus on these “persistent structures of colonialism and neocolonialism” which continue to “play out in economic, social, and political systems both within and between nations [...]”<sup>255</sup>

This analysis of the mutually reinforcing systems of male supremacy and white supremacy, and the colonial histories and neocolonial structures which produce these systems, has important implications for gender transformative work with men and boys, and MenEngage Alliance itself. As a global social change network, MenEngage operates within a global architecture of aid and development, which is rooted in these colonial histories. That this architecture is neocolonial in its structuring of power relations between “Global North” and “Global South” has long been recognized, though now more openly discussed within the aid sector itself. A recent statement by the UK-based Gender and Development Network’s Women of Colour Forum makes clear that:<sup>256</sup>

*Time after time, the international aid sector has failed to make the space for rigorous discussions about systemic racism and White supremacy and the ways in which they work to uphold structures and authorities – international, national and local – that perpetuate the racism and paternalism of international aid and development.*

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<sup>253</sup> Casey, Erin, Juliana Carlson, Sierra Two Bulls and Aurora Yager. 2016. “Gender Transformative Approaches to Engaging Men in Gender-Based Violence Prevention: A Review and Conceptual Model.” *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*:1-16. p12

<sup>254</sup> Anon 2019. p1-2

<sup>255</sup> Ibid. p9

<sup>256</sup> Gender and Development Network’s Women of Colour Forum. 2020. “Collective Statement on Systemic Racism and White Supremacy in the UK International Aid Sector.” London, UK: Gender and Development Network (GADN) Women of Colour (WOC) Forum. p1

With regional networks spanning Global South and Global North, MenEngage Alliance is well-placed to both recognize and contest these “structures and authorities – international, national and local – that perpetuate the racism and paternalism of international aid and development.” Part of this contestation must involve acknowledging that the Alliance’s own internal structures and processes, with a Global Secretariat headquartered in Washington DC and most of its business being conducted in English, may serve to perpetuate a neocolonial paternalism between global North and South, and unwittingly reinforce the racism discussed above.

If a necessary commitment to decolonizing our practice requires this self-reflection on internal processes and structures, it also calls for greater self-awareness about the systems of knowledge production on which the field of gender transformative work with men and boys has been built. Leading masculinities scholar Raewyn Connell notes the need to understand and address the “coloniality” of masculinities; that ideas about and practices of masculinities and femininities have long been shaped by colonial histories and neocolonial realities. A growing number of scholars and researchers from the Global South are documenting this:<sup>257</sup>

*Taken together, they highlight the effects of colonization, the consequences of racial hierarchies, and the cultural and psychological correlates of global economic dependence. If we take such concerns, not as marginal but as central to the analysis of masculinity, a major change in the field of study becomes possible.*

In this way, “rather than speaking of the globalization of gender, it is more accurate to speak of the coloniality of gender.”<sup>258</sup> But much of the knowledge informing gender transformative work with men and boys is produced by an “economy of knowledge” that privileges neocolonial perspectives. There remains a widespread use of terms such as “traditional masculinity” which is infused with colonial perspectives on a linear conception of progress, from the backward to the modern. As Connell writes:<sup>259</sup>

*A great deal of metropolitan discussion involves a linear vision of historical succession. There is a past, often associated with a vague idea of ‘traditional’ masculinity; and there is a present, associated with ‘modern’ masculinities. There is also a literature that contrasts modernist with postmodernist perspectives on masculinity; this also involves an idea of succession within the metropolitan container. [...] Once the coloniality of gender is recognized, we can no longer be satisfied with linear successions of time in thinking about masculinity.*

An important component of decolonizing our practice then as the MenEngage Alliance is to heed the “[c]alls to rethink ideas about masculinity from post-colonial or global-South starting points” and contribute to the production and sharing of knowledge about masculinities that takes full account of the colonial histories and neocolonial dynamics referred to above.<sup>260</sup>

One aspiration of the 2020-21 Ubuntu Symposium is to think and act in ways that support decolonial organizing. This is embodied in the symposium name itself. While the colonial languages have no direct

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<sup>257</sup> Connell, Raewyn. 2014. "Margin Becoming Centre: For a World-Centred Rethinking of Masculinities." NORMA: The International Journal for Masculinity Studies 9(4):217-31. p224

<sup>258</sup> Ibid. p220

<sup>259</sup> Ibid. p224

<sup>260</sup> Ibid. p218



translation for 'Ubuntu', the Global North and dominant Western cultures do have a lot to learn from this fundamentally human concept.

The work of MenEngage Alliance is firmly rooted in feminist principles and analysis and builds on the historical heritage of feminist women's rights organizations and movements across the globe. This means that for every issue we discuss, we must ensure that we build on and add value to the perspectives, knowledge and needs of feminist women's rights organizations and others who struggle to end patriarchy. In order to do so, we must be inclusive and accountable to those voices. We intend to strengthen the collective with understanding the ever-shifting political landscape, and our work for gender justice requires an honest reflection on the roles and responsibilities of men and boys to advance women's rights and gender justice. By doing so we aspire to reaffirm our support of feminist goals and our commitment to gender equality and justice, and speak to the pressing social justice issues of our time, including: gender justice; racial justice; LGBTQI rights; universal sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR); realization of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); countering militarism; and advancing climate justice.

## 1.2 Evaluation Findings

This section presents a summary of the Evaluation findings, as conducted and described by Singizi Consulting Africa. MenEngage Alliance has shortened Singizi's executive summary to include it within the Strategic Plan document here. MenEngage provides a brief response by pointing to the relevant sections of this Strategic Plan where the findings will be addressed, in particular in the Result Areas and Outcomes of the 2021-2024 Program. Text marked in **blue color text** was provided by Singizi; MenEngage's response is in **black color text**.

MenEngage Alliance thanks Singizi for their thorough process and use of creative methodology. The evaluation has involved an unprecedented number of respondents, which enabled MenEngage to listen to the perspectives of members and partners regarding the work of the Alliance. The findings are rich and have enabled significant learning for the Alliance. We also thank Singizi for their collaborative approach to the evaluation, and the ongoing support they have provided to inform the Strategic Planning process - not in the least during the challenging time of the Covid-19 pandemic.

## PROGRESS EVALUATION OF THE MENENGAGE ALLIANCE FOR THE PERIOD 2017 - 2020

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | HIGH-LEVEL OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

#### Introduction

In mid 2020, Singizi Consulting Africa conducted an external evaluation of MenEngage Alliance for the period 2017 – 2020. The evaluation focused on the **progress** made by Alliance against the key imperatives emerging from the last evaluation, with a view to **informing** the strategic priorities for the next phase of the Alliance's work. In doing this, the evaluators **assessed the relevance, value add and results** of the work of MenEngage Alliance, both for the network's membership base and for the broader field of

engaging men and boys for gender justice, and **highlighted insights** for the development of the next (2021-2024) strategic plan.

The evaluation took place during the global pandemic, and, at the time of finalizing this report, we are seeing the beginning of the resultant, and widening, economic, financial, social and political crisis. This is expected to worsen as the impact of the pandemic bites, and many respondents recognized this, speaking about the challenges of working in environments where there is so little stability and *“where it is difficult for people to live normally and peacefully.”*

The context of the pandemic impacted on the way in which this evaluation was undertaken (entirely on-line) and likely impacted on responses provided to questions about change: many activists spoke of how challenging this period has been and the extent of the loss of rights experienced. Members strongly asserted that this environment makes the work of the Alliance more critical than ever suggesting that, *“MenEngage networks/members can function as a ‘seawall’, preventing men and boys from ‘falling to the other side’ and providing an alternative male voice and image that can block the potential hegemony of ‘men’s rights’ men”*. This context will also influence the work of the Alliance over the next period, and the kinds of priorities on which the Alliance will need to focus.

## Methodology

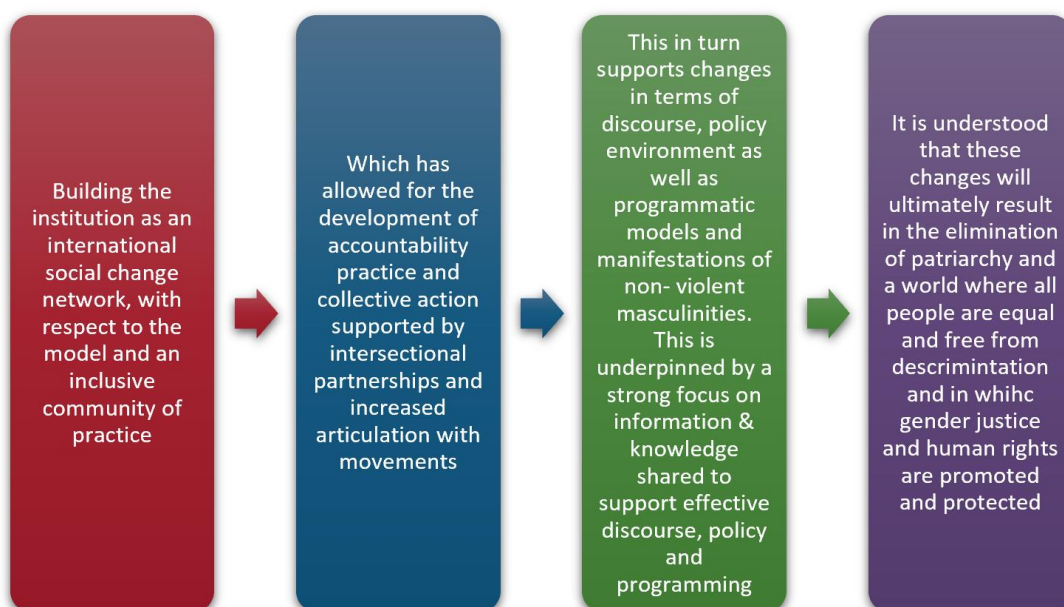
The evaluation primarily used an **Outcomes Harvesting approach**, a methodology that “collects evidence of what has changed and then, working backwards, determines whether and how an intervention contributed to these changes.”<sup>261</sup> A series of surveys were administered to members of the Alliance at national, regional and global levels, to collect their input and to provide a platform for a diversity of voices; combined with collecting stories of change as well as a ‘story completion’ activity (a feminist research methodology, which allows for the accessing and investigation of social discourses). The outcomes were then further refined through interviews and the administration of validation templates with both internal and external role players. The initial findings of this evaluation were also shared in a workshop organized by the Global Secretariat, which deepened and enriched the report.

## Key Findings: Achievements

The harvested outcomes show change and progress of the Alliance over the period under review:

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<sup>261</sup> Wilson-Grau, R. *Outcome Harvesting*. Better Evaluation. 2015. Retrieved from [http://betterevaluation.org/plan/approach/outcome\\_harvesting](http://betterevaluation.org/plan/approach/outcome_harvesting)



### Institutional strengthening of the Network

In line with the recommendations of the previous evaluation, there has been a strong focus on institution building during the period under review. The **organization's internal infrastructure** has been effectively established, including legal status, policies and procedures (focusing on those that address sexual harassment and misconduct). There is a general view that this infrastructural strengthening has led to an **improvement in governance**, specifically at Global and Regional level, and to a lesser extent at national level. Respondents also recognize the level of diversity within the Global Secretariat, which allows regions to feel connected to the global structures. There is an increased sense of **ownership and commitment** at all levels of the Alliance. This is very strong at a global level; and lower at a national and regional level, but both were over 50%.

This improvement in governance at a regional level can largely be attributed to the **network-building support** that has been provided to regional networks by the Global Alliance: regional network respondents indicated that they acknowledge and appreciate the support provided. There is clear evidence of a **shared understanding of the strategic plan** and of the theory of change at all three levels of the Network, and of **increased capacity to address priorities** by the structures and members of the Alliance at all levels. The **funding** that was allocated to regions has been very valuable: respondents spoke to the importance of the sub-grants and the support of regional leadership to growing the work of the national networks and in assisting members to access resources. There is a need to consider how this can be sustained and leveraged across the Alliance.

There is also strong evidence that **knowledge products have been developed and shared**, contributing to improved and more cohesive practice. Similarly, respondents recognize and appreciate the emphasis on **improving communication**, and regional respondents indicated particularly that they thought that the Global Secretariat communicates effectively. Respondents at all three levels indicated that they thought that their secretariats were using better and more efficient communication tools.

The focus of the strengthening of the network has contributed to the **growth and inclusiveness** of the network, in terms of both new members and countries and of the increased voice of young people, women and individuals with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities and expressions. The strengthened networks have also contributed to an **increased level of democratization**, in terms of decision making, transparency and opportunities for new leadership.

Ultimately, the evaluation has produced strong evidence that significant work has been done to establish *a strong, inclusive, democratic and sustainable MenEngage Alliance model (Result Area 5 of the 2017-2020 Strategic Plan)*, which is leading to an organization that is *increasingly capable, inclusive, connected, mobilized [and able to amplify] local, country and regional work on engaging men and boys in gender transformative approaches (Result Area 1 of the 2017-2020 Strategic Plan)*.

### **Collective actions and intersectional partnerships**

Building off this strong institutional base, the evaluation surfaced strong evidence of *accountable practices and partnerships among MenEngage Alliance members and SRHR, women's rights and gender justice movements, based on solidarity, equality, justice and feminist principles (Result Area 4 of the 2017-2020 Strategic Plan)*. In particular, Singizi found that there is a **growing understanding** of the values and principles of the Alliance, as given expression in the **Accountability Standards**, amongst members and partners. The discourse analysis that Singizi undertook of the responses to the story completion exercise, highlight the ways in which members have grappled with their own knowledge and attitudes as part of working in ways that are consistent with the Accountability Standards.

These changes have made an important contribution to consolidating the strength of the network, supporting shifts in understanding and attitudes relating to **power and privilege in a manner that increasingly breaks down hierarchies within the Alliance**. And to the way in which partnerships and engagements with women's organizations as well as with feminists and social justice organizations and movements have been established. Respondents articulated an appreciation for the role of the network in creating a space with shared values and enabling collective action whilst ensuring that members continue to have autonomy: *"Because of the way we operate we built a culture and a connection as members that provides support and energy. This is really significant because we are working in a hostile environment – to be able to lean into others who are like-minded and share values"*.

In particular, multiple **respondents from women's organizations spoke to their increased willingness to work with MenEngage** because of this commitment to accountability. This was particularly true at a global level and to a large extent at a regional level. These partnerships have been instrumental in the Alliance's ability to take forward advocacy and other actions.

The extent to which MenEngage Alliance is part of a **movement** or collaborating with different movements in an ad-hoc manner was evidenced throughout the evaluation. There is evidence that the ways in which MenEngage has engaged with accountability has enabled the networks to gain trust, build relationships and contribute to wider social and gender justice movements. There is also an increasing awareness of intersectionality, and one Global respondent noted that the Alliance is able to speak out about *"climate change and our responsibility as MenEngage activists to speak up and do something about it. Now we are recognizing more the specific struggles of trans and non-binary people. Now we are talking more about accountability to the feminist movements and the LGBTQI movements as a cross cutting theme in all we*

*do. And during these last few months after the murder of George Floyd and the protests, now we are talking more about racism and anti-blackness. In sum, it's an increase in political awareness."*

### **Shifting discourse, policies and models**

The results in this evaluation suggest that the focus of the Alliance on the development of the structure and accountability practices, this work has yielded real change in shifting discourse and policies on women and gender equality. This is based on the considerable evidence that the Alliance is working on its **advocacy strategy in a more coordinated manner**, including through the Advocacy Working Group (AWG), and has contributed to knowledge on transforming patriarchal masculinities and engaging men and boys in gender justice. There is also evidence of the Alliance working to elevate the voice and experience of activists to the relevant forums. This work is **increasingly recognized** outside of the Alliance, and Singizi found evidence that members are ever more being invited to join policy processes, to participate in a wide range of forums at various levels, and that the input which members provide in these processes and forums is valued.

Ultimately, Singizi saw that the work of the Alliance in these areas is contributing to the establishment of *an enabling policy environment for gender transformative approaches with men and boys to advance women's rights and gender justice, SRHR for all, GBV prevention, redistribution of unpaid care, peace and security (Result Area 2 of the 2017-2020 Strategic Plan)*: there is clear evidence that the Alliance has contributed to shifting **discourse and policies** that support the inclusion of meaningful language to engage men and boys in ways that address gender justice.

Parallel to the work on influencing policy frameworks has been a focus on **sharing evidence-based resources to support effective programming**, and to enhance the efficacy of programs. Again, there is substantial evidence that *Programs, campaigns, advocacy efforts and organizations in the gender equality and human rights field are informed and strengthened by the information and knowledge produced by MenEngage Alliance and members on gender transformative, intersectional feminist and rights-based approaches to men and masculinities in advance women's rights and gender justice, SRHR for all, GBV prevention, redistribution of unpaid care, peace and security ... (Result Area 3 of the 2017-2020 Strategic Plan)*.

The Alliance has shared learning about programming, which has contributed to the strengthening of the capacity of members in terms of both programme design and implementation, resulting in more effective programming. Respondents provided examples of how these changes in discourse, policy and programs have resulted in a shift towards the elimination of patriarchy and towards gender justice.

## **Emerging issues and recommendations to address in the next period**

### **Strengthening governance at a national level**

The evaluation has highlighted the extent to which governance arrangements, at all levels, have been strengthened during the period under review. However, we found that there is a need to ensure that there is a sustained effort **to facilitate appropriate support to the country networks in strengthening their governance structures**, ensure that they are not reliant on one organization (and that larger organizations create spaces for smaller less resourced organizations) and enhance their capacity to develop clear action plans. In this regard it is noted that the support provided by the regional structure

varies across regions, which suggests a need to closely work with the regional leaderships so that they can more effectively support and strengthen governance and operation of country networks.

**MenEngage response:**

MenEngage Alliance seeks to be a vibrant and pluralistic civil society social change network that contributes effectively, using a rights-based approach to our decentralized and democratic organizing. Following our collective organizing principles, MenEngage Global supports the platforms and processes which help to link members within and between country and regional networks, as well as linking country and regional networks with each other, and linking members at the local level with the decisions and operations of MenEngage Global. It is on the strengths of these links, and the relationships of trust, respect and inspiration that they help to foster, that MenEngage Alliance as a community of practice depends. This approach will be informed by our guiding commitments, including the need to strengthen decolonized approaches in our networks and leadership building. Result Area 1 - which focuses on Networks Building and Leadership Development, addresses how we seek to do so in the coming years, in particular Outcome 1.1 that focuses on Strengthening democratic governance structures and leadership capabilities of MenEngage Alliance at all levels.

**Ensuring that the Network model adopts a horizontal approach to leadership and decision-making:**

There is an on-going imperative to challenge patriarchal models of leadership (which is still present in a limited number of cases within the regions and/or countries) and make a conscious effort to ensure that **leadership is more fluid** (that is that organizations/individuals take on different roles and that there are mechanisms to ensure that leadership changes); that a **horizontal approach to decision making** is implemented; and that a more equitable measure of **determining who participates** in regional and global events (to ensure that this is not limited to only a few people from a region) are systematically applied. This encourages an approach to leadership that is **grounded in the Accountability Standards**. This form of leadership should also ensure that there are **spaces created within the network to address any concerns**, related to sexual harassment and/or other forms of abuse of power, should these emerge. This requires an **increased awareness of the Code of Ethics** (arising from the Accountability Standards) and **ways to ensure an adherence** to these standards.

**MenEngage response:**

This area of recommendations linked to the findings above regarding matters of governance: while democratic structures and mechanisms are important, it is the leadership of individuals as well as the collective at all levels that can make significant difference. Therefore in the next strategic phase we are strengthening focus on leadership development based on the guiding commitments within the Alliance and its organizing structures at all levels. Under Outcome 1.1 (see above) we include *MenEngage leadership, at country, regional and global levels, have strengthened capabilities for horizontal leadership, agenda-setting and organizing models that support decolonization and address power dynamics/hierarchies within the Alliance*. Activities will include facilitated discussions on power dynamics and relationships among MenEngage members, in particular with the leadership of country and regional Steering Committees, and with Global Board members. We will also develop leadership workshop materials, building on an ongoing collaboration with feminist organizations, such as CREA, and their “power-with” materials developed with MenEngage Global.



The need for increased awareness on and application of the Alliance's principles, codes of conduct and standards will also be addressed through Outcome 3.2 *Strengthened understanding and application of MenEngage Accountability Standards, Core Principles and Code of Conduct among members and partners*. This includes activities to jointly organize capacity strengthening activities with country and regional networks to contextualize and institutionalize the updated MenEngage Accountability Standards, Core Principles, Codes of Conduct and related tools; developing a targeted dissemination and promoting strategy across the membership and broadly (see also Communications strategy). To monitor adherence to the standards and ethics, we will conduct a periodic survey on their use, building on the findings of the 2017-2020 evaluation and the 2019 Accountability survey as base-line data. In the case that misconducts arise, we are developing the reporting and redressal mechanisms to handle and address cases of violations of MenEngage Code of Conduct, Sexual Harassment policy and Accountability standards and guidelines. These processes will also be further developed at country and regional levels, in an interconnected manner.

#### **Strengthening communication:**

Whilst respondents at all levels suggest that there are excellent communication tools, there is a need for **a stronger focus on internal communication**. In this regard several considerations are highlighted: there is a need to consider how the global secretariat communicates with members at a national level. That is, whether this communication should only take place through the regional networks or, in some cases, directly? The choices that are made in this regard must both strengthen the relationships between regional and national and ensure that there is effective communication with national members. These arrangements need to address the concerns highlighted in the evaluation about **communication needing to be inclusive** in terms of language (French/Spanish) as well as reflecting a balance between the more 'academic' articulation of the role of men and boys in moving towards gender equality versus the language and approaches relied upon in community-based activities. The need for improved communication also extends to an increased focus on communicating key developments within the network (such as the allocation of sub-grants) as well as, critically, the need to support an increased sharing of educational resources at a national level.

#### **MenEngage response:**

This area of evaluation findings is prioritized under Outcome 1.2 which focuses on *Expanding and improving membership engagement in MenEngage communities of practice*. A stronger focus on internal communication is needed to ensure communication is *inclusive* - in terms of language (French/Spanish) and *accessible* - balancing the more 'academic' articulation of the role of men and boys in moving towards gender equality versus the language and approaches relied upon in community-based activities. The documentation and knowledge products will, initially, be developed in three languages (English, French and Spanish), and be further translated in other languages with support from the Alliance members and partners. Keeping in mind the varying levels when it comes to the discourse and knowledge concerning the priority issues of the Alliance, the documents and knowledge products will be framed in language that is less jargonistic, accessible and speaks to the general public. The documentation and knowledge product strategy will adopt a plural approach keeping in mind the needs of the audience. These findings will inform the community of practice spaces that we will create to improve membership engagement in the next strategic phase; as well the Alliance's Communications and Knowledge Development strategy.

Activities will include development and implementation of a comprehensive MenEngage *membership strategy* to support the empowerment of members to participate meaningfully in the Alliance and add value to their own work and that of the Alliance at a global level. We will closely work with the regional and country networks to implement and contextualise the Alliance's *Knowledge Management & Communications (KM&C) strategy*. We will continue to organize webinars, virtual dialogues and workshops together with the members and partners at national, regional and global levels. In this regard, we aspire that the collective means of organizing and the virtual methods used for the Ubuntu Symposium 2020-21) will facilitate strengthened engagement of the members and partners of the Alliance. The redesigned MenEngage Alliance *website*, will be launched soon, with news updates, a resource database and *virtual spaces for members* to interact, is maintained and operated. Here, active participation of members in MenEngage *online communities* will be stimulated on mutual priorities and interests, facilitating virtual connections for peer-to-peer exchange and learning.

#### **Accountability: partnerships and movement building:**

This evaluation has illustrated the **importance of the increased understanding of accountability**, for personal change as well as for strengthening and growing the network. The increased understanding and commitment to the Accountability Standards have also allowed the network to build more inclusive and quality partnerships with women's organizations, social justice organizations and to a slightly lesser extent with LGBTIQ+ organizations (in part explained by the legal challenges in many countries in the network) and has ensured a stronger youth voice. However, some respondents suggest that there is still a need for **on-going work to build awareness** of the Standards at national level. There also appears to be some unevenness across regions and countries about the level of inclusivity. There is a need to encourage conversations within the network about how to **sustain efforts to be inclusive** and to undertake this in a manner that continues to **value diversity**, ensure the full participation of members and continue to focus on drawing in men and boys. Further, there is a need to ensure that inclusivity reflects the national and regional imperatives giving concrete expression to the commitment to work in an intersectional way.

The other dimension of accountability relates to the need for an on-going conversation and awareness about **when the network should 'show up and not take space' and when it should play a more assertive role**: that is, when should MenEngage support, and primarily observe and listen, and ensure that women's and LGBTIQ+ organizations within the feminist movement lead. And when should MenEngage play a more proactive role, so that it sustains its own 'niche' and ensure that there are spaces created that engage men and boys for gender justice. This within the context of the imperative to collectively 'advocate for feminist-informed, gender transformative, human rights-based language & approaches to engaging men & boys & transforming masculinities'.

This need to **balance visibility with an awareness around creating space** also informs the approach the network takes in terms of when the network takes action as the network or when, instead, members take the lead. MenEngage, as a network, is defined by its shared sense of purpose that drives collective actions for gender justice. This means that it goes **beyond a community of practice**, where it simply creates spaces for the sharing of learning (which is a critical component of building the network as a horizontal structure), and, **through joint actions to realize change** (advocacy and programs) and **increase the impact of the activities of each individual member**. This shared purpose and commitment to action does not negate the value of members individually taking forward actions, perhaps utilizing learning through the network



and/or MenEngage resources. However, we are suggesting that there should be an **on-going conversation** about when actions would have a greater impact if done as the collective and under the auspices of the MenEngage Network and when it may be preferable for actions to be undertaken by individual organizations (either with or without reference to their membership of the network).

Further, there is a need for more attention to be placed on the way in which MenEngage **interacts with movements**. There are still questions, emerging from this evaluation, about the extent to which the Alliance seeks to systemically contribute to the building of movements or, as is currently the case, participates in ad-hoc activities with movements. Our view is that, in order to contribute to change in an intersectional manner, there is a need to **be more purposeful and consistent** about the ways in which the network contributes to movement building.

**MenEngage response:**

Strengthening accountable practices and implementation of the Alliance's standards was a key priority for the Alliance's work during the 2017-2020 strategic phase. This high prioritisation and focus will continue to remain in the next phase. Regarding the importance of increasing understanding of accountability, see our response above under the section "*Ensuring that the Network model adopts a horizontal approach to leadership and decision-making*" where we describe our commitment to strengthen awareness on, application of, and adherence to the Alliance's Accountability standards. During this strategic period we will be closely working with our country and regional networks and members on strengthening understanding and capacity on accountable practices and institute a redressal mechanism that will serve as the foundation for ensuring the meaningful and proper implementation of our collective standards.

The issues raised through the evaluation around movement building have been extensively discussed during the Strategic Planning process, and while there are many elements cross-cutting throughout the 2021-24 Program, in particular Result Area 4 is designed in response to the recommendations. We have resolved that in order to contribute to movement building, we need to first 'get our own house in order', and strengthen members' collective capability to be meaningful allies to these movements. Therefore we will, amongst others, *strengthen movement building orientation among MenEngage members, including capabilities on building meaningful relationships and accountable partnerships with diverse feminist and social justice activists, organizations, networks and movements at country, regional and global levels* (Outcome 4.1). In consultation with various MenEngage leaders active in a variety of movements, such capacity strengthening with members on partnership building will be informed by modesty, let-them-lead, listening, asking the right questions, decolonized approaches, and accountability.

Of course strengthening movement building orientations is not an end-goal in itself. The strategic planning process affirmed MenEngage's commitment to have proactive role to collectively advocate for feminist-informed, gender transformative, human rights-based language & approaches to engaging men & boys & transforming masculinities. Result Area 2 speaks to our commitment to increase MenEngage's political stances and voices, in particular by taking a more *vocal and visible stance to challenge patriarchal masculinities and advocate for gender equality and social justice*. (Outcome 2.3) In the next strategic period, we will work to strengthen our collective voice and positions through advocacy and campaigning efforts on issues confronting intersectional feminist and LGBTQIA+ movements, in particular by speaking out against the

institutional and ideological expressions of patriarchal masculinities, male supremacy and unjust gender and social norms at all levels. Building on various exploratory processes carried out in the previous years (*especially on GBV prevention, SRHR for all, SOGI Learning Circle, Militarism and Masculinities Learning Circle, climate justice and youth leadership*) we will utilize the rich expertise of our members, as well as its strategic partners, in order to become more visible and vocal on national, regional and global gender and social justice issues.

Increased movement building orientation and political voice will be informed by *strengthened partnerships and solidarity actions with Feminist, LGBTQIA+, Youth, Racial-, Indigenous-, Economic- and Climate Justice organizations, networks and movements by MenEngage Alliance and members*. (Outcome 4.2) We will monitor and evaluate assessments of partners from feminist and social justice movements whether we have strengthened accountable practices and meaningful partnerships at country, regional and global levels throughout the period of this strategic plan and beyond.

We will work to *increase representation and participation of feminist women's rights, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and young people in MenEngage leadership and decision making* (see Outcome 1.1). We will develop and implement a *comprehensive youth leadership and engagement strategy* to support meaningful participation and leadership of young people across all pillars and priorities of the Alliance. (see Outcome 1.2) Through Outcome 4.3 we commit to *strengthen diverse SOGIESC inclusive organizing, approaches and politics, together with relevant organizations, networks and movements by MenEngage Alliance and members*. While strengthening LGBTQIA+ inclusivity is addressed throughout the Strategic Plan, through this specific outcome area MenEngage Alliance will continue working to dismantle heteronormativity within the Alliance. In doing so we are mindful of the importance to contextualize language as guided by local members and partners, and therefore we include activities with *MenEngage Regional networks to contextualize knowledge products, plans and activities for being more gender diverse and inclusive*.

### **Maintaining a balance: leveraging funding to support gender justice work more broadly**

The evaluation has highlighted that respondents **value the funding** that they have received and can explain how this has assisted to strengthen the network at all levels. There is also evidence that the network has **encouraged members to adopt a collaborative approach to fundraising**. The survey found that sub-grants have assisted the regional networks to leverage additional resources for work at a national level. Respondents from all regions/countries hope that the sub-grant process continues, and some respondents requested that the funding reach countries and/or members that may not have directly benefited from the sub-grant in the past.

These findings do not allow for a simplistic response: it almost goes without saying that there is a need to ensure that the **process of allocating funding is clearly and transparently communicated**, and that it is allocated specifically to **enable the activities of members** (with a bias towards support for women's organizations as well as organizations that may struggle to access funding, such as small organizations). However, there is a need to ensure that the network, rather than only fundraising for itself, also **plays a facilitative role** so that increased funding for the network as a whole translates into benefits for members and partners. Further, there is a need for the Alliance to consider how to manage its reliance on external donors through exploring what is possible to ask of its members in terms of in-kind contributions.

**MenEngage response:**

In the next strategic phase we will continue the sub-granting model to the regional networks. See Outcome 1.1, through which *MenEngage regional networks are supported with technical and financial resources (subgrants) to facilitate implementation of national and regional strategic plans*. As was decided in 2014, MenEngage Global Alliance does not function as a sub-grantor to the regional networks in the sense of a donor-recipient relationship - we work together through an approach based on mutual support and strengthened partnerships. With the support of an ad-hoc Board working group, MenEngage Global Alliance has set-up mechanisms for sub-grant handling and related procedure, as well as the mechanism whereby the funds are allocated equally for all the regional networks. It was agreed that the use of the sub-grants is something that the regional networks leadership will decide based on their priorities at the regional and country levels.

MenEngage Global Alliance is in the process of updating its *resource mobilization and fundraising strategy* (see Outcome 1.1). At the same time the Alliance acknowledges negative funding trends in the women's rights and gender justice field. Hence, MenEngage Alliance advocates for reallocations and increased funding streams for such work. When we have the possibility, we advocate for direct fundings to women's rights organizations, and point donors to such organizations, and vice-versa.

We are conscious of the risk of NGO-ization, in particular in the context of shrinking civil society spaces, the ongoing struggle for resources and funding, and the challenges embedded in communicating the value-additions of network-building as different from program-and project-implementation. The risks for MenEngage of NGO-ization and de-politicisation as a consequence of enhanced institutionalization, formality and fundraising needs had been flagged in the previous evaluation of 2012-2016. So far we have been able to avoid depoliticization, and in fact *advance politicization* of our work, not in the least because of the core-support from Sida. In our fundraising MenEngage Global Alliance will continue to keep within its identified areas of added value, particularly network building, strengthening accountable practices, and coordinating collective political voice - so as not to compete with the Alliance membership base.

**Learning, monitoring and evaluation: the value of the Theory of Change approach**

The final set of recommendations relate to the learning, monitoring and evaluation (LME) process. Throughout this evaluation, **respondents expressed an appreciation for the evaluation and the extent to which it was implemented using a participatory design**. Respondents suggested that it is important that time is created to listen to the **perspectives of members and partners** regarding the work of the Alliance. There was a strong view that more regular evaluative activities would be advantageous, and that there is a need to find different ways of sharing this learning and documenting experiences such that members across the Alliance can understand the types of achievements being realized and, critically, the factors that enabled these changes.

Going forward we would recommend the following to ensure that the evaluative questions are addressed in a systemic way and that this contributes to on-going and collective learning:

- There is a **systematic focus on enabling a shared understanding, amongst members and partners, of the MenEngage Alliance’s Theory of Change**. The ToC should be communicated in a way that allows for a clear articulation the pathways to change<sup>262</sup> within the MenEngage Alliance Theory of Change.
- The Theory of Change should be coupled with a **clear learning, monitoring and evaluation (LME) framework** with clear indicators of success. This monitoring and evaluation work will allow for a learning process that supports a deeper understanding of whether the anticipated pathways to change ‘hold up’ and that enables members to adopt reflective practices that allow for adjustments to be made (in terms of assumptions, actions and even the focusing of outcomes) based on this learning.
- We would suggest that for the LME system to be utilized there is a need to **take the nature of the network into account**. The methods employed should be easy to complete (especially given the volunteer nature of the network), and should encourage participation as well as the horizontal sharing of experiences and learning in ways that support the development of a strong learning culture (rather than a focus on compliance and/or formal reporting).

All of these methods assume that **LME is prioritized within the network** and that the approach to LME is guided by the imperative of building participation and voice into the learning process as well as the need to ensure that the data that is collected is analyzed and shared, in different ways, with regional and country members in a manner that supports improved planning, the strengthening of the networks as well as learning and accountability.

#### **MenEngage response:**

Now that the external evaluation of the strategic plan 2017-2020 has been conducted, MenEngage Global will work with the Regional Networks to share the findings, support facilitation of discussion and integration of responses into the Regional Networks’ plans for the coming years. We plan to use the recommendations to further strengthen the strategic plan and governance structures to be able to address the learning and collective agenda-setting vision.

As highlighted in the Section 3 of the Strategic Plan 2021-24, the last chapter on Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning, we are committing to strengthen a learning culture within the Alliance. This recommendation from the 2017-2020 Evaluation is reflected in Outputs that focus on improving organizing and communications about promising practices, achievements and learnings from Global and Regional to better support country and local membership in their networks and leadership development (RA 1), accountable advocacy (RA2), programming (RA 3) and movement building (RA4). It is also reflected in our approach to facilitating dialogue and learning initiatives, such as collective learning in the face of urgent threats (RA3&4).

The PME&L strategy of MenEngage Global Alliance will include a new elements taken as learnings from the 2017-2020 Evaluation, including the development of a PME&L framework for MenEngage Alliance, that enables learning on how MenEngage contributes to improved programming on the ground and includes collectively agreed core indicators of change (see also Outcome 3.1). In order to ensure the proper followup and implementation of this framework, we will conduct annual membership surveys, building on the survey conducted as part of the 2017-2020 Evaluation. (see Outcome 3.2).

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<sup>262</sup> Pathways to change refers to the different ways that we expect change to take place (and associated assumptions)

MenEngage Alliance's PME&L processes will be inspired and informed by intersectional feminist approaches, principles and discourses around PME&L. The Alliance's PME&L system will be informed by our identity as an international social change network (in contrast to an NGO), including setting parameters on capturing the progress and learnings from the implementation of the Strategic and Annual Plans, and Theory of Change. This will continuously inform the operations and functioning of the Alliance. The PME&L System will be closely aligned with the Alliance strategic planning processes with the regional networks and membership. These collective processes are as important for networks building and as products of these processes. This will include systematizing the planning and management processes and approaches into the learning agenda, including the accountability framework. The PME&L framework will analyze the interconnections between the Alliance's Theory of Change, Strategic Plan and learnings from the implementation of the plans throughout the years, as well as their role in facilitating the functioning of the Alliance as a social change network.

### **In Conclusion**

In conclusion, this evaluation has taken place during a time of change. There is a need for the Alliance to strengthen the inter-sectional nature of its response, particularly given the increased levels of poverty related to COVID-19 and a number of other disasters driven by climate change. There are also rising levels of backlash, and in this context, there is an important role for MenEngage to provide a strong, progressive and feminist male voice and image. Finally, there is the work of combatting the voices of racism as well as other harmful discourses. This evaluation has highlighted the significant progress that has been made against the results frame (2017-2020). The network has been strengthened, partnerships developed, and changes made in terms of discourse, policy and programs. It will be vital that in this next phase these changes are consolidated across regions and in countries and then amplified such that the Alliance can effectively contribute towards its goal of gender justice.

#### **MenEngage response:**

This entire strategic plan has been informed by the Evaluation process and insights, which ran in parallel with the Strategic Plan development process. Singizi consulting has ongoingly shared and discussed their evaluation findings with the Global Secretariat team, and presented the preliminary findings to the Board during the strategic planning process. As a result, this 2021-24 strategic plan is a response to the Evaluation findings and recommendations, combined with MenEngage Global's own assessment of our work the past years, the needs of the field, and the progress we need to make the coming years in order to add the value that we believe the world needs to see from us right now.

## **1.3 Implications for Next Phase**

MenEngage Alliance is made up of many organizations and individuals who have come together as collectives at country, regional and international levels, within which each level has specific roles to play in advancing its collective mission. Currently the Alliance is organized through 6 regional and 43 country networks bringing together over 900 members across 73 countries around the world. Efficient and effective lines of coordination and communication are vital to maximize the transformational outcomes

to which the Alliance aspires in its overall role as an international social change network dedicated to gender and social justice, as opposed to an INGO that implements programmes and projects.

A shared understanding of how change is perceived, of how change will happen and the expected changes that will occur, is key to aligning and articulating the different levels, instances and actors of the MenEngage Alliance. Following the mission of the Alliance, MenEngage Alliance as a social change network, as explained above, aims to influence economic, political and cultural conditions across the world and all levels.

Within the Alliance the members work individually and collectively reflecting heterogeneous contexts and aptitudes of the work in the 'men and boys for gender equality' field. Following its aspirations of a social change network, informed from the movement building approaches, the Alliance is dedicated to add value and be part of the broader feminist and social justice movements. Similarly, as an international social change network, we strive to link local efforts, experiences and learnings with global processes and build a diverse and inclusive global coalition contributing meaningfully to dismantling patriarchal power relations through strengthening the 5 key processes which we consider the conditions:

- a) Promoting dialogue and exchange to cultivate creativity and critical thinking on dismantling patriarchy and transforming masculinities.
- b) Facilitating platforms for exchange, analysis and learning between and among diverse actors on promising strategies for dismantling patriarchy and transforming masculinities in complex situations.
- c) Generating knowledge on patriarchy and masculinities in local, national and regional contexts to inform global problems and solutions.
- d) Consolidating regional and country networks that are mutually empowering to converge in international platforms for dismantling patriarchy and transforming masculinities.
- e) Fostering international alliances, partnerships and platforms to promote and disseminate women's rights and gender justice (feminisms)

This requires strengthening gender transformative approaches that engage boys and men - along with girls, women and people of all genders - and that transform unequal power relations. Countering the social norms that govern structural inequalities, and are shaped by historical and contemporary trends and institutions, requires a long-term strategy. It is necessary to generate, integrate, and disseminate grounded local knowledge and priorities, from "South" to "North", through local ownership of programs, networking and partnership building, advocacy, and communicating these ideas at scale. MenEngage Alliance, through its key strategies, membership base and sustainable and democratic networking structures, is uniquely positioned to play this role.

MenEngage Alliance operates as a system of collaboration and co-responsibility -upwards and downwards, where different levels and instances have specific roles and contributions that are interconnected. Hence strengthened decentralization combined with strong communications is crucial to ensure that the system and its interconnected sub-systems work efficiently and effectively, and enhances the Alliance's potential, results and legitimacy. When working to strengthen its roots, the Alliance will keep its focus on the three interrelated pieces of the puzzle: a) decentralization, b) democratization and c) interlinkages – between countries, between regions, between levels (country-region-global) - and between networks. Here as such the role of the Global Secretariat would heavily be around interregional and cross-country coordination and technical and financial support, and global advocacy (nourished from

the regions). Furthermore, MenEngage Alliance has an important role to play in addressing critical concerns and supporting work with men and boys that is gender-transformative, based on feminist and human rights principles, aims to challenge power and privilege, and ultimately to end patriarchy. This calls for strengthening associations and relationships with key feminists, women's rights, LGBTIQ+ and social justice movements, through increasing mutual understanding, building trust among movements, and identifying commonalities that can build bridges.

In the next strategic phase there is need for:

- ☐ More engaged membership (RA1)
- ☐ More accountable leadership (RA1)
- ☐ More horizontal, less North-South/big-small (RA1)
- ☐ More politics in the policy (RA2)
- ☐ More national in the advocacy (RA2)
- ☐ More quality in the programming - more peer-to-peer (RA3)
- ☐ More collective learning in the face of urgent threats (RA3&4)
- ☐ More movement building in orientation (RA4)

## SECTION 2

# Intervention Logic

## 2.1 Vision, Mission and Guiding Commitments

MenEngage Alliance is a social change network, harnessing the collective energies of our 900 members toward ending patriarchal power, protecting human rights and achieving gender- and social social justice. MenEngage exists to bring together people and organizations with a shared vision of a world in which gender justice and human rights are promoted and protected, where all people are equal and free from discrimination and oppression.

Toward this vision, the **mission** of MenEngage Alliance is to transform unequal power relations and dismantle patriarchal systems by:

- Transforming masculinities and rigid, harmful norms around ‘being a man’;
- Working with men and boys on gender justice through intersectional feminist approaches;
- Building inclusive collaborations from local to regional to global levels; and
- Developing joint actions in partnership with and accountability to women’s rights, gender- and other social justice movements.

### **MenEngage Alliance’s guiding commitments**

The work of MenEngage Alliance, a social change network of member organizations operating in differing political, economic and social settings across the world, is guided by a set of shared **commitments**. These commitments distinguish the work of MenEngage Alliance from that of other actors engaging men and boys, including so-called men’s rights groups.

### ***MenEngage Alliance is committed to:***

**Human rights:** The promotion and protection of universal human rights are fundamental to the work of the Alliance. From the local to the global level, MenEngage Alliance promotes the mandates, statements of action, and principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against



Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) and its annual reviews through the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) statements, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and works collectively to encourage governments to do the same.

**Feminist principles and vision:** MenEngage Alliance is firmly rooted in feminist principles and analysis, taking inspiration from historical and contemporary feminist struggles to dismantle patriarchy, and leadership from women's rights organizations and coalitions across the globe. As the Delhi Declaration and Call to Action, agreed at the conclusion of the 2nd MenEngage Global Symposium in 2014, makes clear:<sup>263</sup>

*We owe our awareness of gender injustices, our efforts to promote equality, and the occurrence of this Symposium itself to the pioneering courage and vision of feminist and women's rights movements. We align with the work of women's rights organizations and recognize all achievements in the transformation of the social, cultural, legal, financial and political structures that sustain patriarchy.*

**Gender justice:** MenEngage Alliance seeks to destabilize patriarchal masculinities and male supremacy, and to support manifestations of non-violent, equitable and inclusive notions of manhood. In doing so, MenEngage Alliance understands gender injustice to be the product of gender hierarchies (of men over women, male over female, masculine over feminine), which themselves are rooted in a binary system of gender relations that privileges cisgendered, heteronormative masculinity above all other gender identities and expressions. MenEngage Alliance recognizes that underpinning this work must be a commitment to the Yogyakarta Principles, the main international instrument outlining human rights with respect to sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC).<sup>264</sup>

**Social justice:** MenEngage Alliance acknowledges that patriarchy does not exist in isolation from other systems and relations of power and, consequently, adopts an **intersectional approach** to its work. This recognizes that oppressive ideologies and institutions (sexism, homophobia, transphobia, racism, ableism, xenophobia, classism, etc.) are interconnected and cannot be addressed separately from one another. The complex interplay of multiple identities and positions within hierarchies of power can increase vulnerability and further entrench inequalities and injustice. MenEngage Alliance seeks to contribute to an intersectional analysis of men and masculinities issues and enhance an intersectional approach in the work of the Alliance and our members. In doing so, we center our work in *feminist* analysis and vision: acknowledging patriarchy at the roots of gender-based power inequalities, and recognizing the need to address male power and privilege.

**Decolonization:** Central to this intersectional understanding of MenEngage Alliance's work on gender justice is the recognition that gender relations and hierarchies have long been shaped by histories of colonialism. MenEngage Alliance recognizes our own location within and dependency on a system of international aid and development which, irrespective of intentions, perpetuates a neocolonial paternalism between global North and South. MenEngage Alliance commits to questioning and unpacking how colonial, eurocentric and hegemonic structures of power continue to produce contemporary inequalities, within the world and our own organizing as a reflection of this world. We commit to reflect on how these highly unequal structures can be addressed, toward decolonizing our practices.

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<sup>263</sup> MenEngage Alliance. 2014. "Men and Boys for Gender Justice: Delhi Declaration and Call to Action." *2nd MenEngage Global Symposium: Men and Boys for Gender Justice*. New Delhi, India.

<sup>264</sup> <https://yogyakartaprinciples.org/>

**Anti-racism:** MenEngage Alliance acknowledges the importance and urgency of making space for rigorous discussions about systemic racism and white supremacy within our own coordination and governance structures, as well as supporting member organizations to do the same. MenEngage Alliance commits to an ongoing process of collective self-reflection and self-education on the manifestations of systemic racism and white supremacy in our structures, staffing, operations and strategies, toward specifying time-bound, resourced and measurable approaches to make our practices in all these domains anti-racist.

**Accountability:** MenEngage Alliance is a solidarity-based social change network. Our members share the mission of transforming masculinities and working with men and boys on gender justice through intersectional feminist approaches; in other words, the members work with those who most benefit from patriarchal systems in order to dismantle those very systems. Thus, the membership of MenEngage Alliance comes together as a social change network to act in solidarity with women's rights organizations, LGBTQIA+ organizations and movements for intersectional feminism and gender justice more broadly. This commitment to solidarity requires a deep understanding and practice of accountability. As a core principle of MenEngage Alliance, accountability involves the responsibility to consult closely with, listen to, take leadership from and partner equally with the organizations and leaders representing those most affected by gender injustice and patriarchal systems. Building the internal capacities and processes that are necessary to deepen understanding and practices of accountability across all levels of the Alliance's work will continue to be a major focus for MenEngage Alliance.

## 2.2 An Alliance for Change

### 2.2.1 Rationale for Alliance building

In a context of intensified patriarchal backlash and renewed gender conservatism in many countries, the need for collective actions on gender justice by progressive voices and civil society actors has never been greater. The lessons of history, as well as findings from research, make clear that significant social change to address entrenched inequalities and hierarchies depends on progressive organizations coming together in movement for social change. From anti-colonial struggles, to the U.S. civil rights movement, to the women's movement and gay liberation movements from the 1970s onwards, it was the collective strength and vitality of these movements that shifted laws, policies and norms.

Research bears this out. A study examining the factors that account for variations in state responses to violence against women across the world concludes that relatively progressive state responses have depended on "the autonomous mobilization of feminist movements, their linkage to international norms and networks, and the ability of local groups to bring global agreements home to matter in local contexts."<sup>265</sup> This was pivotal in the mobilization and achievement of the ICPD in 1994 and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995. It is also clear that such autonomous mobilizations are resurgent the world over, including a new global wave of international feminist actions and the increasingly coordinated movements that are developing around them.<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>265</sup> Htun, Mala and S. Laurel Weldon. 2017. "States and Gender Justice." Pp. 158-77 in *The Many Hands of the State: Theorizing Political Authority and Social Control*, edited by K. J. Morgan and A. S. Orloff. New York: Cambridge University Press. p173

<sup>266</sup> Arruzza, Cinzia, Tithi Bhattacharya and Nancy Fraser. 2018. "Notes for a Feminist Manifesto." *New Left Review* 114(November-December):113-34. p115

Never has it been more important, then, that organizations committed to working in solidarity with those most targeted by gender injustice and patriarchal systems also come together to find and express their collective voice in support of struggles for gender and social justice. MenEngage Alliance is an expression of this desire for global solidarity, collective actions and shared learning. Unlike an international NGO that prioritizes programme or project implementation, MenEngage Alliance is a solidarity-based social change network that creates processes and platforms through which member organizations come together around a set of shared commitments, standards and principles.

Central to these processes and platforms is the conception of MenEngage Alliance as fostering a **community of practice** among its diverse membership. Indeed, for many members, a sense of belonging to this community is an important motivating factor to be involved with the Alliance, and one of the rewarding benefits of membership. A core task for MenEngage Global, comprising the Board and Global Secretariat, is to coordinate the development of processes and platforms that serve to nurture this community of practice among the membership. This process of community building is one of the main 'products' of the work of MenEngage Global.

MenEngage Alliance serves as a community of practice for its members in order to develop and enhance collective:

- **Voice:** By coming together in country and regional networks, members are more able to express their shared, collective voices in solidarity with those most marginalized by gender injustice and patriarchal systems in their contexts;
- **Action:** By coming together in country and regional networks, members are more able to take collective action toward policy and political agendas for transforming patriarchal masculinities in their contexts, in solidarity with those most marginalized by gender injustice and patriarchal systems;
- **Accountability:** By coming together in country and regional networks, members are more able to be collectively accountable and work in collective solidarity with organizations and leadership from communities most marginalized by gender injustice and patriarchal systems;
- **Learning:** Through cross-Alliance platforms and processes, members share promising practices and lessons learned, discuss and apply research and evidence, develop and disseminate thought leadership, and collectively contribute to improving gender justice work with men and boys;
- **Standards:** Through cross-Alliance platforms and processes, members set and enact a set of common standards for the work of transforming masculinities and gender justice work with men and boys, especially in terms of standards of accountability to women's rights organizations, LGBTIQ+ organizations and movements for intersectional feminism and gender justice more broadly; and
- **Support:** Through cross-Alliance platforms and processes, members come together to support, inspire and energize each other.

## 2.2.2 Structure of MenEngage Alliance

MenEngage Alliance is a decentralised network. We understand that while the challenges we face in the world today have many common denominators, a deeper understanding of the issues and the development and implementation of effective strategies and activities that can help address them, requires **contextualized expertise and implementation**. We therefore value country and regional

priorities and activities, and we strive to bring them together at an international level. We create democratic, participatory structures at regional and country levels in keeping with MenEngage Alliance's guiding principles, that brings all collective together. The activities of MenEngage country and regional networks are set by the country and region respectively, and may extend beyond, or be more limited than, the roles of the Global Alliance, which further informs the global joint collaborations and advocacy efforts.

The organizational structure of MenEngage Alliance is made up of the following components:

**Country Networks:** A MenEngage Alliance country network exists when member organizations and individual members come together under the banner of the Alliance to promote its values and mission at the national level. Country networks are generally formed when there are multiple organizations who are interested in becoming members of the Alliance in the country. Please see here for more information on the [networks building and strengthening](#) approaches of the Alliance. There is no prescribed organizing model for country networks; some access funds of their own, have occasional face-to-face meetings and develop their own plans and activities; others operate via virtual platforms. Some country networks have national steering committees and/or focal points. Whilst the autonomy and diversity of country networks is an important value, the guiding Core Principles, Code of Conduct and Accountability Standards of the Alliance support country networks to work within a joint framework and approach and create democratic, participatory structures. There are currently 43 country networks in existence, based on MenEngage Alliance registers.

**Regional Networks:** There are six MenEngage Alliance regional networks that, in each region, bring together the country networks, member organizations and individual members in the region. Each regional network has their own governance structure, with a steering committee and a regional secretariat/representative, who takes part in the Global Board. Each regional network has a regional steering committee (SC) and a regional coordinator, identified through democratic processes. The work of the Alliance at the regional level is guided by a steering committee, composed of representatives of the national networks and/or sub-regions and/or membership across the region (especially where there are no country networks), depending on the size and structure of the regional networks. The steering committee is vested with responsibility for major decision-making on the priorities and directions for the Alliance in the respective region. The regional networks are coordinated or managed by regional coordinators (or co-coordinators) who will be responsible to manage the day-to-day activities as the regional secretariat, which would report to the regional steering committee. The activities of MenEngage regional networks are set by the region, and may extend beyond, or be more limited than, the roles of the Global Alliance, which further informs the global joint collaborations and advocacy efforts.

MenEngage Regional Networks are resources for strengthening national networks and facilitate processes to create and sustain national networks based on fair, accountable and democratic leadership structures and strategies. They provide technical support and capacity building on all aspects of national network and/or membership development, including leadership development and mentoring, organizational strengthening and technical skills building, including enhancing the capacity brokering the provision of technical assistance. MenEngage regional networks also support advocacy and campaigning at the national level, especially on more politically contentious issues where solidarity between countries could help push change at the national level; monitoring policy implementation across the region. The regional networks jointly as well as independently identify fundraising and resources mobilization for the implementation of their regional strategic plans.

### **MenEngage Africa - MEA**

MenEngage Africa (MEA) is the largest regional network, with more than 300 member organizations organized in 23 country networks. MenEngage Africa is the strongest region in terms of financial sustainability, enabling the network to conduct collective activities across the region and to provide sub-grants to most of the country networks. MenEngage Africa's advocacy work at regional level before the African Union and other regional bodies, such as the SADC Parliamentary round-table, their Network Building Toolkit, their regional training for leaders (MATI-course) and other key materials they have produced have been useful references for other regional networks and for MenEngage Global.

### **Caribbean Male Action Network (CariMAN)**

The Caribbean Male Action Network (CariMAN) is a regional network of individuals and organizations in Caribbean region working to challenge existing social and cultural beliefs and norms around masculinities and advocate for equality and justice for all. Its work is driven by its mission to challenge the existing social and cultural beliefs and norms around masculinities and advocates for equality and justice for all, by engaging men and boys and strengthening networks and alliances, with individuals and organizations that promote human rights, gender and environmental justice. CariMAN is present in 7 English speaking Caribbean countries, with varying structures at country level. CariMAN work to encourage men and boys in the region to be advocates for gender, social and environmental justices, and work in solidarity with women, girls and people of all gender identities to achieve the common vision of gender and social justice, and freedom of all forms of discrimination and violence. CariMAN acknowledges and respects the diversity among men and boys in Caribbean region, in terms of age, religion/spiritual beliefs, ethnicity, class, ability, educational background, sexual orientation and identities, geography and any other status to promote positive development, livelihood and existence. CariMAN is governed by an Executive Committee and its secretariat leads the implementation of its work plan and financial management. CariMAN have established partnerships with UN agencies in the region to promote the role of men and boys, including in ending violence against women.

### **MenEngage Europe – MEE**

MenEngage Europe (MEE) is one of the Alliance's most widely-spread regional networks, with 86 member organizations and 40 individual members spread across 33 countries. The European network does not have any country networks yet, but has 2 sub-regional networks in Nordic and Iberia sub-regions. MEE members come together to engage men and boys in transforming patriarchal masculinities and promote gender equality, and adhere to the network's core principles, including taking human rights perspective and engaging as allies to organizations working for the rights of women and children. The key focus areas for MEE and its members are on preventing gender-based violence and violence against children, working with youth to redefine gender norms, end violence and promote sexual health and rights, promoting men's equitable fatherhood and caregiving, and Improving health outcomes for women, children and men themselves. MenEngage Europe was formed in 2009 and has since then seen a steady development both in number of members and scope of activities, especially during the last three years. The MEE network is governed by a Steering Committee, under the leadership of 2 co-coordinators, both elected through a democratic process at its members' meeting. MEE has, since 2018, established its regional secretariat that leads the secretarial and implementation of the strategic plan of the regional network. MEE's overall operation and functioning is governed by its 'House Rules', including the implementation of its newly updated strategic plan.

### **La Red MenEngage America Latina (MenEngage Latin America)**

MenEngage Latin America is a vibrant regional network of 110 members organized through 12 country networks. MenEngage Latin America is an alliance of organizations dedicated to working on transforming patriarchal masculinities and engaging men and boys in gender equality, with programs, projects, advocacy, campaigning and research across the region. The network members are involved in the White Ribbon and the MenCare Campaigns in the region. They co-organize regional level conferences, such as several Colloquiums on Men and Masculinities, which usually brings together leaders from the country networks, women's rights activists, academia, youth leaders and other critical stakeholders to advance work with men and boys for gender equality. The regional network is governed by its regional Steering Committee and the co-coordinators, elected through democratic process every 2 years.

### **North American MenEngage Network - NAMEN**

North American MenEngage Network (NAMEN) is a US/Canada regional network of organizations and individuals working with men and boys to achieve gender equality, end violence, and promote health for men, women and children in North America. Recently NAMEN inherited the 501c3 nonprofit status of one of its founding members and operates as a network of members with a board drawn from the general membership responsible for decision-making, communications, and the management of collective activities. NAMEN provides a means by which members (individuals and organizations) can connect with each other regarding their efforts to transform patriarchal masculinities and engage men and boys in gender equality and justice. Currently NAMEN has 28 organizational and 65 individual members, with a secretariat team that supports the implementation of its strategic plan. NAMEN prioritizes accountability towards women's rights and social justice movements and organizes periodic webinars to exchange knowledge and best practices as part of their Community of Practice approach.

### **MENENGAGE ALLIANCE SOUTH ASIA - MEASA**

MenEngage Alliance South Asia (MEASA) is a dynamic regional network of 221 organizational and 42 individual members organized through five country networks, with a primary focus on network strengthening and promoting knowledge sharing, capacity development, and collaboration among organizations at regional and country levels. The network is governed by the regional steering committee, that is selected through democratic processes at the country and regional levels, comprising 3 representatives of each of the country networks in the region. The network in Sri Lanka currently serves as the secretariat of the regional network, following its democratic procedure of rotating the coordinating responsibilities among the countries. MenEngage South Asia hosted the 2nd MenEngage Global Symposium in November 2014, facilitating an ongoing wave of initiatives and connections among activists and organizations working with men and boys to promote gender justice in different areas. The network has strong relationships with feminist, SRHR and women's rights activists, organizations and networks in the region.

**MenEngage Global:** MenEngage Global Alliance refers to the organization which serves as the implementing entity of the Program (see Section 3), responsible for anchoring the work of the Alliance and supporting members' activities. MenEngage Global Alliance is registered as a non-profit organization in the USA. MenEngage Global consists of a Board and Secretariat:

**Global Board:** The MenEngage Global Board refers to the Board of Directors that is responsible for the governance of the Alliance at the global level, including oversight of programs and finances of the Global Secretariat, and for carrying out global fundraising. The Board consists of representatives from the Alliance's regional networks and international at-large member organizations.

**Global Secretariat:** The MenEngage Global Secretariat refers to the executive body of the MenEngage Alliance at the global level. It is composed of staff responsible for the implementation of MenEngage Alliance's strategic priorities, carrying out global fundraising with the Board, and managing the global budget. The Global Secretariat is led by two Co-Directors with a team of expert-activists from diverse backgrounds, who demonstrate leadership in the Alliance's strategic areas of work, including networks building, advocacy, communications, knowledge development, and accountability. As a team, the Global Secretariat plays a significant role in supporting that MenEngage Alliance operates as a membership-based network in spirit and in practice, working to empower the membership and facilitating joint action. The team works decentralized, with staff members working remotely from various places in the world.

**Cross-Alliance Working Groups:** MenEngage Global has facilitated the formation and coordinated a number of cross-Alliance Working Groups to strengthen intra-Alliance collaborative action on strategic priorities. Working Groups are formed at the request of Alliance members and/or Global Secretariat, based on the needs arising from the Strategic Plan and related work-plans. Working Groups may be chaired by Global Board members or other Alliance members, with relevant expertise and leadership on the issue and topic of focus. Where possible, participation is structured to ensure regional and gender balance. There are two distinct types of working groups: on strategic approaches and on priority issues, including emerging priority issues.

To date, MenEngage Alliance Working Groups include:

*Advocacy Working Group:* With a vision to strengthen the collective effort to advance the policy advocacy work of the MenEngage Alliance, the Advocacy Working Group (AWG) was created in September 2017. The Working Group comprises balanced representation of regional networks and at-large members, with a particular interest, experience and/or knowledge of advocacy. The Working Group is coordinated by the Advocacy Manager at the Global Secretariat.

*Communications Working Group:* The MenEngage Alliance Communications Working Group (CWG) works with representation from all regional networks to help shape the overall Knowledge Management and Communications of the Alliance. At the Board and Strategy Meeting in August 2018, the Regional Coordinators and further regional representatives, At-Large Partners, as well as the Global Secretariat decided to advance the effort to form the CWG. The Working Group is coordinated by the Communications Coordinator at the Global Secretariat.

*Youth Reference Group:* The Youth Reference Group is a group of young activists and experts on working with children and young people from across the Alliance. The Group guides the Alliance's work on youth leadership and engagement, and works together on all youth-focused and youth-led activities. The group is chaired by one of the Board members "Advocates for Youth", and anchored by one of the team members of the GS. Currently this group consists of 30 members of the Alliance from across the regions and brings together diverse youth leaders and experts on issues of youth leadership and child rights.

*Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) Working Group:* This is one of the longest standing working groups of the Alliance. It comprises leading SRHR and Masculinities expert members from across the Alliance. The Group supports and contributes to the overall strategic directions that the Alliance has set for the SRHR issues and related advocacy. The Group also provides guidance and support to the Alliance's efforts to increase and strengthen on-going collaboration between members and partners, including women's rights, SRHR, LGBTQI+ rights, and feminist social justice movements. The SRHR Working Group currently comprises eight members and is chaired by a member of the Alliance's Global Board.

*Sexual Orientation, Gender Identities and Expressions and Sexual Characteristics (SOGIESC) Learning Circle:* The SOGIESC Learning Circle is one of the key communities of practice made up of MenEngage Alliance members with expertise in SOGIESC rights. The learning circle aims to further advance the Alliance's thinking, discourse and actions around the intersections of SOGIESC and masculinities issues. The learning circle is chaired by one of the expert Board members, and coordinated by an expert member of NAMEN together with a GS staff member. The Learning Circle has eight individual and organizational members of the Alliance, from across country, regional and global levels.

*Militarism and Masculinities Learning Circle:* This learning circle is a key community of practice that is mandated to develop and strengthen understanding and actions on the issues of Militarism and Masculinities. The learning circle was able to create space for reflection, the sharing of expertise and the propelling of joint initiatives, as well as deepening its understanding, programmatic action and advocacy around issues related to the Women Peace & Security agenda. This learning circle is chaired by one of the expert MenEngage Board members, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF).

Other working (ad hoc and sub) groups at the global level have been formed and active during a specific time-frame for a specific task, including Sexual Harassment Policy development; exploration of issues around sex work/prostitution.

## 2.3 Theory of Change

As a social change network, whose diverse membership across 73 countries operates in widely differing political and socio-economic conditions, MenEngage Alliance is both a single entity, with a shared vision and mission, and a multiplicity of organizations, with their own mandates and strategies. Any theory of change developed by and for MenEngage Alliance is therefore processual: a continuing conversation among a changing membership about the dynamic and differing conditions of gender injustice in which MenEngage Alliance works; and about understandings of and approaches to addressing these conditions in order to advance gender- and social justice.

As a solidarity-based social change network, such a **process-driven continual theorizing of change** is essential. In partnering with and taking leadership from movements of those most targeted by gender injustice and patriarchal systems, it is their collective analyses and assumptions about how best to dismantle such systems that must guide the work of MenEngage Alliance. This requires a continuing dialogue with gender justice movement partners about philosophies of, and approaches to, transformational change that make more explicit underlying assumptions of how and why change might happen, and about the contributions that MenEngage Alliance can make to this larger transformational agenda for gender justice.



This emphasis on a process-driven continual theorizing is in line with emergent best practice within international development. A 2012 review of the concept and use of Theory of Change found that many practitioners *“see it as a deeper reflective process and dialogue amongst colleagues and stakeholders, reflecting on the values, world-views and philosophies of change that make more explicit people’s underlying assumptions of how and why change might happen as an outcome of the initiative.”*<sup>267</sup> This emphasis on process also reflects the growing emphasis within international development on adaptive responses to development challenges. A 2016 paper on *Using Adaptive Development to Support Feminist Action* notes that *“development processes are context-specific, complex and unpredictable – which means that problems and realistic solutions cannot be determined in advance and change is unlikely to unfold in a linear manner.”*<sup>268</sup> Such non-linearity is also the result of the resistance that efforts to make progressive change in gender hierarchies will face: *“Reducing gender inequalities requires altering entrenched social norms, discriminatory laws and unequal power relations between men and women. These are all complex, context-specific and highly political processes. Assistance to women’s rights and gender equality is often too prescriptive or rigid to support feminist action and gender reform that is genuinely locally led, and too siloed within organizational ‘gender ghettos’ to tackle root drivers of inequality.”*<sup>269</sup>

Within this emphasis on a process-driven and adaptive approach to our theory of change, MenEngage Alliance is also clear that our mission to “transform unequal power relations and dismantle patriarchal systems” by “transforming masculinities” and “working with men and boys on gender justice through intersectional feminist approaches” requires that we specify the meaning of these terms. Only with this clarity can MenEngage Alliance enter conversations about a transformational agenda for gender justice with an understanding of the specific contributions it can make to answering the following questions:

- WHAT is to be changed?
- WHO are the agents of change?
- HOW will change be achieved?

### 2.3.1 WHAT is to be changed?

Every society has a gender order; an arrangement of political, economic and social relations of power reflecting and reinforcing ideas about gender differences and hierarchies, and expressed in personal attitudes and behaviors, institutional policies and practices, and societal traditions and belief-systems. In most societies, the gender order is organized around a binary system, which privileges men over women, and masculinity over femininity. These expressions of the binary gender order that operates in most societies are based on the meanings and valuations attached to notions of masculinity and femininity, which underpin inequalities between men and women. For this reason, gender equality work targeted at men and boys has focused on changing “masculinities,” and in particular, challenging “patriarchal masculinities.”

**Patriarchal masculinities** are those ideas about and practices of masculinity that emphasize the superiority of masculinity over femininity and the authority of men over women. Ideas about and practices

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<sup>267</sup> Vogel, Isabel. 2012. “Review of the Use of ‘Theory of Change’ in International Development: Review Report.” London, UK: UK Department for International Development. p3

<sup>268</sup> O’Neil, Tam. 2016. “Using Adaptive Development to Support Feminist Action.” London: Overseas Development Institute. p6

<sup>269</sup> Ibid. p6-7

of patriarchal masculinities serve to maintain gender inequalities and power hierarchies more broadly. They are expressed individually (in attitudes and behavior), institutionally (in policies and practices) and ideologically (in social norms and cultural narratives.) The members of MenEngage Alliance, diverse as they are, work on many issues related to gender injustice, but they share a common interest in understanding the operations of patriarchal masculinities in maintaining and deepening such injustice and in identifying ways of challenging and transforming such masculinities in order to secure gender justice. We seek to destabilize stereotypical male gender roles and hegemonic expressions of manhood, and support manifestations of non-violent, equitable and inclusive notions of manhood, by changing social norms that shape boys' and men's behavior.

As the context analysis at the beginning of this Strategic Plan makes clear, the need to do so has never been greater, with a resurgence of patriarchal gender conservatism and the rise to power of explicitly misogynist political leaders in a number of countries. Developing gender transformative ways to challenge patriarchal masculinities at the individual level remains an ongoing concern for the members of MenEngage Alliance. Yet, as discussed in Section 1.2.5, the field of gender transformative work with men and boys has been critiqued, both by its own practitioners as well as by those with whom it seeks to ally, for being too focused on individual-level change strategies. The Evaluation of MenEngage Alliance's work over the period of the 2017-2020 Strategic Plan echoes this, noting that more attention must be given to supporting members to deepen their analyses of patriarchal masculinities at the institutional and ideological levels, and to develop gender transformative strategies for institutional and ideological change.

### 2.3.2 WHO are the agents of change?

Movements for gender justice center the leadership and experiences of those most targeted by gender injustice. But from the earliest days of the women's movement and gay liberation movement, men were coming together as pro-feminist and straight allies in support of such movements. It was recognized that not only had such men a role to play in these liberation struggles, but also a responsibility to undo the systems of power and privilege from which they benefit. In many ways, MenEngage Alliance came together in order to answer a set of questions relating to how best to 'engage' those who are privileged by patriarchal systems ("men and boys") in dismantling these very systems, while acknowledging that men and boys are also affected by these patriarchal systems.

MenEngage members work with many different communities and constituencies including people of all genders and sexualities, but they share a common interest in supporting those who are privileged by patriarchal systems to be agents of change in transforming these systems. Over the last 5-6 years, MenEngage Global has developed a significant set of resources on Accountability Standards to ensure that this work with men as agents of change remains fully accountable to the leadership and experiences of those most targeted by gender injustice. The Evaluation attests to the importance and influence of these resources, and the continuing need to support their uptake.

It has also become clear over the last four years that MenEngage Alliance as a whole must take more account of the heterogeneity of the category "men and boys" and that patriarchal power and privilege is shaped by many other forces and factors of marginalization and oppression. As leading scholar of masculinities Raewyn Connell has emphasized: *Class, race, national, regional, and generational differences cross-cut the category "men," spreading the gains and costs of gender relations very unevenly*

*among men. There are many situations where groups of men may see their interest as more closely aligned with the women in their communities than with other men.*<sup>270</sup>

Working as they often do with women and men together, MenEngage Alliance members are well-placed to mobilize men as agents of change around their shared interests with women in their communities. But to do so effectively requires a deeper understanding of and engagement with the intersecting forces of oppression that spread "the gains and costs of gender relations very unevenly among men." A clear finding from the Evaluation is the need for MenEngage Alliance members to deepen their intersectional approach to "engaging men and boys," and to develop ways to link with other struggles for social justice (e.g. on economic justice and racial justice) as part of our efforts to mobilize men as agents of change for gender justice. This intersectional approach also directs attention to the men who benefit most from patriarchal systems. As Connell again reminds us, on "*a global scale, the men who benefit from corporate wealth, physical security, and expensive health care are a very different group from the men who provide the workforce of developing countries.*"<sup>271</sup> Developing strategies to demand change from the men at the top of gender and related hierarchies remains a key priority.

### 2.3.3 HOW will change be achieved?

Given that MenEngage Alliance came together around the question of how best to 'engage' men in efforts to dismantle patriarchal systems and promote gender justice, we have been concerned with what it means to do "gender transformative" work with men. Three broad areas of work have emerged as being constitutive of the gender transformative contribution that work with men as agents of change in transforming patriarchal masculinities can make to the broader struggles for gender justice being led by feminist and LGBTQIA+ movements, namely: programming with men for personal change and social action; support to policy and political advocacy by women's rights and LGBTQIA+ movements; and gender justice movement building with women's rights and LGBTQIA+ organizations.

**Programming with men for personal change and social action:** Taking its cue from the feminist insight that the "personal is political", an early and continuing focus of gender transformative programming with men and boys has been to change personal attitudes and interpersonal behaviors. On issues such as sexual and reproductive health and rights, parenting and care work and the prevention of gender-based violence, there is an emerging body of evidence to show that such gender transformative programming can be effective at the individual level of change.<sup>272 273</sup> Over time, such programming has expanded to include strategies to address change in patriarchal social norms through social action campaigns, and there is a growing recognition of the need for more emphasis on working with men to change the patriarchal cultures of male-dominated institutions, such as the military and law enforcement organizations.<sup>274</sup> Given

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<sup>270</sup> Connell, R. W. 2005. "Change among the Gatekeepers: Men, Masculinities, and Gender Equality in the Global Arena." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 30(3):1801-25. p1809

<sup>271</sup> Ibid. p1809

<sup>272</sup> Edström, Jerker, Alexa Hassink, Thea Shahrokh and Erin Stern. 2015. "Engendering Men: A Collaborative Review of Evidence on Men and Boys in Social Change and Gender Equality." *EMERGE Evidence Review*. Promundo-US, Sonke Gender Justice and the Institute of Development Studies.

<sup>273</sup> Casey, Erin, Juliana Carlson, Sierra Two Bulls and Aurora Yager. 2016. "Gender Transformative Approaches to Engaging Men in Gender-Based Violence Prevention: A Review and Conceptual Model." *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*:1-16.

<sup>274</sup> Peacock, Dean and Gary Barker. 2014. "Working with Men and Boys to Prevent Gender-Based Violence: Principles, Lessons Learned, and Ways Forward." *Men and Masculinities* 17(5):578-99.

the growing visibility and influence of men's rights activism in many parts of the world, there is a pressing need to continue to expand the reach and enhance the impact of this gender transformative work with men for personal change and social action.

**Support to policy and political advocacy by women's rights and LGBTQIA+ movements:** Legal and policy change to promote and protect the human rights of women and LGBTQIA+ communities continues to be a significant focus of women's rights and LGBTQIA+ movements. Patriarchal, homophobic and transphobic law and policy reinforce and reflect patriarchal masculinities, and organizations working with men as agents of change to transform patriarchal masculinities have a role to play in supporting the efforts of women's rights and LGBTQIA+ movements to change such law and policy. Many MenEngage Alliance members are involved in supporting such policy advocacy and in speaking out against the manifestations of patriarchal political cultures in their societies. As the discussion of political context in Section 1.2.1 makes clear, a growing authoritarianism and patriarchal backlash threaten the legislative and policy gains that have been won; working in solidarity with women's rights and LGBTQIA+ movements to defend and advance these gains is an important task for gender transformative work with men.

**Gender justice movement building with women's rights and LGBTQIA+ organizations:** As section 2.2.1 makes clear, significant social change to address entrenched inequalities and patriarchal hierarchies depends on progressive organizations coming together in a broad movement for structural change. Recent years have witnessed an upsurge in such movement activism and protest by women's rights and LGBTQIA+ organizations in response to the patriarchal backlash discussed above. There is a growing recognition within the "men for gender equality" field that an important aspect of gender transformative work with men and boys must be to act in solidarity with and help to reinforce efforts by women's rights and LGBTQIA+ organizations to build and strengthen broad-based movements for gender justice.

## 2.3.4 Summary of intervention logic

Over the course of the last four years, MenEngage Alliance has continued to debate and reflect on our theory of change, in order to articulate more clearly our contributions to the broader transformational agenda being led by those most targeted by gender injustice. This articulation has evolved over the life of the 2017-2020 Strategic Plan now ending, shaped by the development of the Theory of Change statement and by the findings from the Evaluation of the current Strategic Plan.

What has become clear is that as a social change network, MenEngage Alliance depends on our strength and sustainability as a community of practice to be able to support and enhance our members' efforts to contribute to a broader transformational agenda for gender justice. With this foundation of an accountable, democratic and inclusive community of practice, MenEngage Alliance is then able to make progress on our mission to "transform unequal power relations and dismantle patriarchal systems" through our gender transformative contributions (shifts in discourse, policies and programs) to the struggles for gender justice being led by women's rights and LGBTQIA+ movements, as discussed above.

This articulation of the intervention logic for MenEngage Alliance structures the logic in terms of **four purposes for which the Alliance exists** in order to make our most effective contribution to broader struggles for gender and social justice. Each of these four purposes guide the work of MenEngage Alliance toward a respective Result Area, discussed in detail in Section 3. These purposes are to:

- Develop a shared culture of non-hierarchical and accountable decision-making as the foundation for a democratic and inclusive alliance (Result Area 1);

- Express our collective voice in order to influence policy and political discourse (Result Area 2);
- Build our community of practice in order to improve gender justice programming with men and boys (Result Area 3); and
- Strengthen our network of solidarity in support of gender justice and related social justice movements (Result Area 4).

## 2.4 Strategies for Change

MenEngage Global, comprising the Board and Secretariat, is responsible for coordinating the work of MenEngage Alliance. The Global Secretariat is tasked with executing the decisions made by the Board on strategic directions and priorities for the Alliance. In carrying out this executive function, the Global Secretariat uses four main strategies, namely being to:

- **LINK:** Alliance and partnership building
- **LEARN:** Knowledge management
- **IMPROVE:** Capacity strengthening
- **INFLUENCE:** Advocacy and campaigning

### 2.4.1 LINK: Alliance and partnership building

MenEngage Alliance exists in order to link our members in a community of practice, aligned around a shared vision and mission of transforming unequal power relations and dismantling patriarchal systems. MenEngage Global supports the platforms and processes which help to link members within and between country and regional networks, as well as linking country and regional networks with each other, and linking members at the local level with the decisions and operations of MenEngage Global. It is on the strengths of these links, and the relationships of trust, respect and inspiration that they help to foster, that MenEngage Alliance as a community of practice depends.

Transparent, accessible and accountable communications within and between the multiple structures, from national to regional to global levels, are essential to building this sense of community across the membership. The Communications Working Group continues to develop and refine the necessary communication tools and channels for this. The work done by MenEngage Global Secretariat on Accountability Standards and Guidelines has also been crucial in acknowledging and addressing issues relating to how power is exercised and distributed across the different levels and structures of the Alliance. Given our commitment to decolonizing practice (see Section 2.1 on guiding commitments), this emphasis on ensuring that the internal operations of the MenEngage Alliance are democratic, inclusive and accountable to our Code of Conduct and Core Principles will remain an important area of work for MenEngage Global in this Strategic Plan.

These Accountability Standards and Guidelines, and related learning resources, also provide guidance and support to member organizations and national and regional networks in their efforts to link and partner with women's rights and LGBTQIA+ organizations. Building partnerships that work in solidarity with, and accountability to, the organizations and leadership of those most targeted by gender injustice will continue to be a central commitment of the Alliance in this Strategic Plan. Findings from the Evaluation make clear that this commitment requires continued attention by MenEngage Global to ensure these Accountability Standards are applied in practice. It is also clear from the Evaluation that further work is

needed by MenEngage Global to support Country Networks in actively engaging their members, address leadership practices at all levels of the Alliance, facilitate closer linkages between regions and make the deliberations and operations of MenEngage Global more accessible, transparent and responsive to the membership.

## 2.4.2 LEARN: Knowledge management

MenEngage Alliance is a learning network, committed to generating, sharing and applying practice-based knowledge, together with research-based evidence, on transforming masculinities and mobilizing men and boys as agents of change in dismantling patriarchal systems. Members around the world are continually adding to a rich body of insights, knowledge and resources arising from their work, and MenEngage Global continues to refine tools and processes by which such knowledge can be collated and disseminated, both across the Alliance and with the “men for gender equality” field more generally. A key task for MenEngage Global is to facilitate the sharing of members’ experiences and elevate the work happening at grassroots level in order to raise awareness of promising practices, strengthen capacity, and inspire further action.

There are several external audiences for the knowledge that MenEngage Alliance helps to generate. In addition to practitioners and researchers in the “men for gender equality” field, MenEngage Global also seeks to share our knowledge products with women’s rights and LGBTQIA+ organizations in the broader gender justice movement. Not only does this help to build relationships of trust and credibility with such organizations, but this knowledge sharing is itself a way in which MenEngage Alliance can remain accountable to those who are most targeted by gender injustice. In addition, with the increasing emphasis given to “engaging men and boys” in the gender equality discourses and portfolios of intergovernmental organizations and donor agencies, the knowledge generated by MenEngage Alliance helps to set an agenda for transforming patriarchal masculinities and working with men and boys on gender justice through intersectional feminist approaches.

Findings from the Evaluation highlight the need for MenEngage Global to prioritize efforts in this Strategic Plan to foster greater peer-to-peer learning and exchange among members. In addition, there is a need to increase the accessibility of the ever-expanding evidence base, by helping to distill key lessons and insights from research on and practice within the broader “men for gender equality” field, and making such information available in multiple languages where possible. Given the context analysis outlined in Section 1, it is also clear that there is an urgent and specific need to crowdsource the expertise and experiences of MenEngage Alliance members in countering the misogynistic messaging and propaganda of men’s rights activists, and to develop a knowledge base on strategies and approaches for mobilizing men to reject and resist the patriarchal backlash underway in so many societies.

## 2.4.3 IMPROVE: Capacity strengthening

MenEngage Alliance exists to support our members in improving their work, and in strengthening the capacities they need to be more effective in their efforts to transform masculinities and dismantle patriarchal systems. Much of the capacity strengthening undertaken by MenEngage Global to-date has focused on strengthening the governance and coordination capacities of regional networks, and through them, country networks. As already noted, the quality and cohesion of the community of practice which

the Alliance seeks to foster depends in part on the democratic, inclusive and accountable functioning of these governance and coordination structures.

There has also been a specific focus on the technical capacities that members need to understand and implement intersectional feminist approaches to working with men and boys on transforming patriarchal masculinities. The SRHR Working Group has overseen efforts to strengthen capacity across the Alliance to work on issues of access to safe and legal abortion, comprehensive sexuality education, homophobia and transphobia, contraceptive use and a greater equality in terms of the contraceptive responsibility as well as increasing men's access to and use of HIV services.

Moving forwards, findings from the Evaluation highlight the need to continue to strengthen the capacity for democratic, inclusive and accountable leadership at all levels of the Alliance. Deepening an understanding across the Alliance of the meaning and components of intersectional gender justice is also a priority, not only to enable MenEngage Alliance members to implement intersectional feminist approaches to working with men and boys but also for such members to build credible and accountable partnerships with women's rights and LGBTQIA+ organizations.

#### 2.4.4 INFLUENCE: Advocacy and campaigning

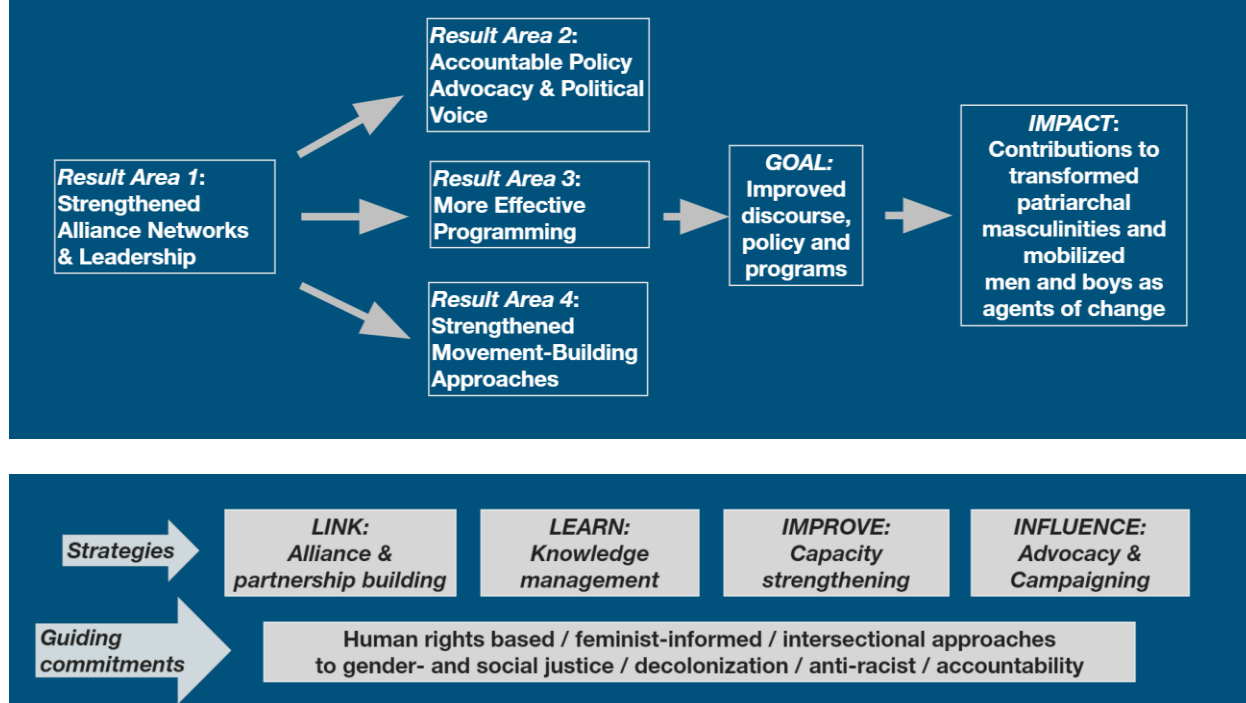
MenEngage Alliance comes together as a community of practice, in part, to express a collective voice in support of advocacy and campaigning for gender justice. The Advocacy Working Group has taken leadership on this cross-Alliance strategy. It has helped to coordinate joint actions at regional and international level, share updates and strategize on key advocacy opportunities in both regional and international UN/Governmental policy mechanisms, as well as consolidating MenEngage Alliance's political discourse and messaging through highlighting the barriers to and need for feminist systems change. The Working Group has been successful in applying an accountability lens in advocacy activities, including in the design, development and implementation of any advocacy actions at global, regional and country levels.

To a varying extent, MenEngage Alliance members, and their country and regional networks, also seek to influence policy and political agendas at their respective levels. The Advocacy Working Group seeks to share cross-regional advocacy promising practices and lessons learned, as well as provide support and solidarity for national advocacy actions with country networks. Findings from the Evaluation suggest that MenEngage Global needs to give more attention to how it can support policy and political advocacy at national and regional levels. It is also clear that the increasingly influential presence of anti-feminist messaging and organizing in public discourse and the public 'space' of the internet demands that MenEngage Alliance, and MenEngage Global in particular, develop a more visible, vocal and compelling external communications strategy to promote gender justice and explicitly counter this anti-feminist discourse. More creative and active use of multiple social media platforms and channels, in collaboration with and accountability to, leading women's rights and LGBTQIA+ organizations will be central to this effort.

# MenEngage Global Alliance Program 2021-2024



## 2021-2024 Program Logic



### IMPACT:

By 2024, MenEngage Alliance has contributed to transforming patriarchal masculinities and mobilizing men and boys as agents of change for gender justice, thereby contributing to ending patriarchal power, protecting human rights and achieving gender equality and social justice.

### GOAL:

By 2024, MenEngage Alliance is a capable, inclusive and accountable social change network, harnessing the collective energy of our members, thereby contributing to improved discourse, policy and programs, in partnership with feminist, LGBTQIA+ and social justice movements.

MenEngage Global Alliance is a pivotal mechanism bringing together members, partners and allies around the world and supporting their work. MenEngage Alliance remains a membership-based social change network in spirit and in practice, working to empower the membership and facilitate joint actions. In the coming strategic period, following the recommendation of the Evaluation, we will continue strengthening the capabilities, knowledge base and roots of the Alliance, and shaping global discourse on transforming patriarchal masculinities and working with men and boys for gender justice.

## RESULT AREAS, OUTCOMES and OUTPUTS

This strategic plan will work to concretely identify the pathways to change and consolidate over the next strategic period from building the foundations of the Alliance, expanding through partnerships and movement building to realising changes in discourse, policy and improved programs. MenEngage Alliance members and partners work in all contexts and at all levels, and through a decentralised model of

organizing. We believe that MenEngage Alliance’s holistic intervention strategy will contribute to increased (quantity) and improved (quality) development and implementation of programs and other interventions with men and boys. Increasing the quantity of work includes, but is not limited to: a) upscaling of promising practices in order to reach large numbers of people, while being sensitive to and adapting initiatives to local contexts and b) institutionalization or adoption of promising practices through policy change or legal action. By doing so, we aim to expose the link between patriarchy and the exploitation of people and the environment, and to help men and boys change their behaviour from “power over” to “power with.” Strengthening the quality of work includes strengthening accountable practices in efforts to transform patriarchal masculinities and engage men and boys in gender equality to ensure that such initiatives are feminist-informed, address patriarchal power and privilege, and challenge male supremacy at all levels. The next phase will prioritize both the consolidation of achievements from the last strategic period and reflection on the wider role that the Alliance plays in contributing to wider change.

As outlined in Section 2, there are **four purposes for which MenEngage Alliance exists** in order to make effective contributions to broader struggles for gender equality, human rights of all women and girls, and social justice. Each of these four purposes guide the work of MenEngage Alliance toward a respective Result Area, discussed in detail in Section 3. These purposes are to:

- Develop a shared culture of non-hierarchical and accountable decision-making as the foundation for a democratic and inclusive alliance (Result Area 1);
- Express our collective voice in order to influence policy and political discourse (Result Area 2);
- Build our community of practice in order to improve gender justice programming with men and boys (Result Area 3); and
- Strengthen our network of solidarity in support of gender justice and related social justice movements (Result Area 4).

**Result Areas** are MenEngage Alliance’s umbrella strategies that will guide our work through 2021-2024, and that will enable us to ultimately contribute to our aspired goal. **Outcomes** are the aspired effects of MenEngage Global by 2024, in contribution to the broader field. Under each Outcome, several **Outputs** are identified: the products and/or services that the MenEngage Global Alliance, consisting of the Global Secretariat and governed by the Global Board, aims to deliver.

This multi-annual program will be further elaborated in annual work-plans for each year starting 2021. The annual plans will include concrete and contextualized activities and deliverables and a further elaboration of the agenda and priority issues in light of international developments each year.

**The 3rd MenEngage Global Symposium – the Ubuntu Symposium** - is taking place from November 2020 to June 2021. For MenEngage Alliance, the Symposium is much more than a one-time event of a couple of days. It is one of the key collaborative and participatory processes of co-creation and ownership. Many of the outcomes we seek to achieve in this Strategic Plan will be advanced through the Ubuntu Symposium process.

The Symposium will be a pivotal moment to culminate the work of the Alliance over the past strategic period; to assess the current state the field on men and masculinities work; and to articulate and mobilize political will for bold next steps for action so that this work contributes to and is accountable to feminist movements. The event will bring together MenEngage Alliance members, practitioners,

academia, activists and policy makers – from civil society, academics, governments, UN agencies – to share, learn, and network.

Going beyond silos of “engaging men and boys”, the event will explore the position of MenEngage Alliance as an ally to broader movements for women’s rights, gender justice, LGBTQI rights, social justice and human rights. Members and partners will come together from across the globe to engage in exchange, reflections and collective agenda setting on critical men and masculinities work as part of efforts to advance women’s rights and gender justice. GLOCAL (local-to-global-to-local) mobilization is a key principle throughout. This approach to organizing the event – centering the principles of broad participation, representation, diversity and inclusivity – is representative of the decolonized approach we are seeking to advance.

The outcomes of the symposium will include new relationships and ideas to tackle the challenges of our time. A collective statement – the Kigali Declaration & Call to Action – will renew and strengthen commitments among those working on male engagement and masculinities for gender justice. The event will inform the political agenda and direction for MenEngage Alliance’s strategic phase 2021-2024.

## **Result area 1: Strengthened MenEngage Alliance Networks & Leadership**

**MenEngage Alliance is an inclusive, democratic and sustainable social-change network undertaking joint actions informed by shared vision and values.**

MenEngage Alliance exists in order to link our members in a community of practice, aligned around a shared vision and mission of transforming unequal power relations and dismantling patriarchal systems. MenEngage Global supports platforms and processes which link members within and between country and regional networks and link members at the local level to the decisions and operations of MenEngage Global. It is on the strengths of these links, and the relationships of trust, respect and inspiration that they help to foster, that MenEngage Alliance as a community of practice depends.

The Evaluation of the 2017-20 Strategic Plan shows that MenEngage Alliance, through its support to the regional networks, has made significant progress as regards increased democratization, opportunities for shared leadership, quality partnerships with women’s organizations, and to a slightly lesser extent with organizations representing LGBTQIA+ rights. The evaluation found that regional networks value the support provided by the Global Alliance and the respect for the autonomy of the regional networks thus feeling connected to the global structure. The Alliance has secured new sources of funding, which has been valuable in strengthening the ability of the regional networks to implement collective actions. The Evaluation points to the need to ensure that increased strengthening of the regional networks is translating into support that strengthens country level operations. It also emphasizes the need to sustain and build on the Alliance’s funding at all levels, to expand members’ opportunities for engagement and to improve the internal communications systems.

In response to the recommendations of the Evaluation, in the next strategic period we will focus our efforts -together with the respective regional networks- on building the national networks. This will include strengthening their governance structures and understanding of their roles in the network, and

strengthening their ability to develop clear action plans and the capacity to support the work of members, and work more effectively with women's rights and LGBTQIA+ rights organizations and networks. This will also be linked efforts to improve accountability at the country level. We believe that by strengthening the country networks as the 'roots' of the Alliance, we will be able to make a more meaningful contribution to advancing gender equality and the human rights of all women, girls and people of diverse gender identities. We believe this will lead us towards Sida's vision of a vibrant and sustainable civil society through building a network that is rooted at the grass-roots level and supports global, regional and national/local actors. Through its vast network of hundreds of civil society organizations and experts around the world, MenEngage Alliance supports Sweden in its ambition to support "actors and groups that have the greatest potential to influence gender equality efforts in the specific context" in which importantly "the role of men and boys as change agents will also be taken into account."

As an Alliance rooted in feminist principles and approaches, we avoid top-down, prescriptive global operating models. We work alternatively to create contextualized bottom-up plans and processes that support the movement-building and mobilization of the membership and partners across the regions and internationally. We will collectively work to break down hierarchies within the Alliance, moving towards more horizontal leadership, agenda-setting and movement-building approaches and models. These processes will be informed by the guiding commitments as outlined in the intervention logic: decolonization, intersectional feminism, accountability and power-with. This we envision will support the Alliance to be more inclusive and less heteronormative in our organizing, politics and collective actions.

In the next period, we will focus on consolidating and strengthening our members' and partners' capacities and facilitate exchange, mutual learning, accountable practices and joint actions among members, through country and regional networks and priorities. We will strengthen our collaborative work and global impact, by amplifying local and regional initiatives. We will continue supporting new members and networks to connect and associate with the work of the Alliance, and strengthen relationships with other networks and movements (See Result Area 4 for more details).

We will work with our members locally and internationally to strengthen individual and collective efforts to recognize and address power imbalances, and foster skills among our members to develop approaches based on empathy and care. As these efforts continue and the Alliance matures as a network, deconstructing invisible power structures within the Alliance will remain a focus during this strategic period.

### Outcome 1.1: Strengthened democratic governance structures and leadership capabilities of MenEngage Alliance at all levels.

We will continue strengthening the 6 regional and 43 country networks, as well as emerging country and regional networks, by creating spaces for exchange, learning, joint strategizing and agenda-setting on transforming patriarchal masculinities and engaging men and boys in promoting gender equality and human rights of all women, girls and people of diverse gender identities. In the Alliance's<sup>275</sup> organizational structure efficient and effective governance and leadership are vital to maximize the transformational mission of the Alliance. We will systematically work to further strengthen members' capabilities for

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<sup>275</sup> MenEngage Alliance is made up of many organizations and individuals who have come together as collectives at country, regional and international levels, within which each level has specific roles to play. Currently the Alliance is organized through 6 regional and 43 country networks bringing together over 900 members across 73 countries around the world.

horizontal leadership, agenda setting and organizing models that support decolonization and address power hierarchies within the Alliance at all levels, following our guiding commitments (*see above*).

The external Evaluation found that during the last strategic period of the Alliance made significant progress in strengthening its governance structures at regional and global levels. This has been evidenced in the growth of the network - in terms of new members and countries and the increased voice of young people, women and individuals with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities and expressions – as well as in its increased visibility with partners and a growing understanding of the values and principles of the Alliance.

In line with this decentralized model, we will work to consolidate the existing structure of interconnected national, regional and global networks. We will continue to address internal power relations and to strengthen country-regional-global connections (the “glocal” nature of the Alliance). We will closely work with the country and regional networks, providing technical and financial support, in the form of seed-grants, to facilitate interconnections and contextualization of the collective vision. A key element will be ensuring meaningful participation and engagement of feminist women’s rights, LGBTIQ+ and young activists and leaders in the governance structures and decision making and build relationships with these actors based on trust, cooperation and the spirit of solidarity.

## **OUTPUTS**

In order to achieve the above outcome during the period of 2021-24, MenEngage Alliance will collectively work to ensure:

1. Stronger **governance structures and horizontal operating modalities** in place at country, regional and global levels, supporting cultural and structural transformation informed by the principles of decolonization, intersectional feminism, accountability and power with.
2. MenEngage **regional networks supported with technical and financial resources (subgrants)** to facilitate implementation of national and regional strategic plans.
3. Increased **representation and participation of feminist women’s rights, LGBTIQ+ individuals, and young people** in MenEngage leadership and decision making at country, regional and global levels.
4. **New country and regional networks** development supported based on the interests of local civil society organizations and individuals.
5. MenEngage **Global Board** strengthened to be an effective and efficient global leadership body to advance the mission and vision of the Alliance.
6. **MenEngage leadership**, at country, regional and global levels, have strengthened capabilities for leadership, agenda-setting and organizing models that support decolonization and address power dynamics/hierarchies within the Alliance.
7. Reporting and redressal mechanisms to handle and address cases of violations of MenEngage Code of Conduct, **Sexual Harassment policy and Accountability standards** and guidelines are in place and operational.
8. MenEngage Global Alliance **resource mobilization and fundraising strategy** developed and successfully implemented
9. MenEngage **Environmental Sustainability and Climate Action plan** developed and implemented.

## Outcome 1.2: Expanded and improved membership engagement in MenEngage communities of practice.

The 2017-2020 Evaluation found that whilst members' sense of ownership in MenEngage Alliance is strong and communications have been improved, a stronger focus on internal communication is needed to ensure communication is *inclusive* - in terms of language (French/Spanish) and *accessible* - balancing the more 'academic' articulation of the role of men and boys in moving towards gender equality versus the language and approaches relied upon in community-based activities. These findings will inform the community of practice spaces that we will create to improve membership engagement in the next strategic phase; as well the Alliance's Communications and Knowledge Development strategy. These spaces will aim to promote honest, challenging, and authentic dialogue on the shared values and principles of the Alliance, and the issues that members work on. MenEngage Alliance will facilitate spaces that embrace uncomfortable and frank discussions that recognise power, privilege, historical wrongs, and spaces for respectful and constructive engagement on topics where there is disagreement or conflict in values or approaches.

Under the leadership of the regional networks, we will continue sharing promising practices, strategies and tools among members at all levels. In the process, the Alliance will encourage the engagement of young people, in all their diversities, in Alliance structures and initiatives, thus supporting the creation of a new generation of feminist and LGBTIQ+ leaders to sustain the work of the Alliance and broadly the feminist and LGBTIQ+ movements.

Building on the Alliance's Communications and Knowledge Management Strategy, we will create opportunities for the field to connect virtually and exchange knowledge, and streamline communications channels and processes. We will support the identification, collection, packaging and dissemination of promising practices and lessons learned by members and partners, capturing the richness of expertise among the network. This will in turn strengthen other strategic priorities of the Alliance, promoting networking, strengthening advocacy, enhancing accountability and contributing to increased awareness by policymakers.

We will further support the Alliance's communities of practice through maintaining the communications listservs and sharing periodic updates with members. This will include regular newsletters that report news, share information and knowledge from across the Alliance, including contributions to international advocacy campaigns, the release of relevant publications and other useful resources, and links to newsworthy articles. We will strategically use and strengthen our social media presence to position the Alliance publicly on issues of transforming patriarchal masculinities and male supremacy, and highlight men's and boys' roles and responsibilities in the context of promoting women's rights, LGBTIQ+ rights, gender equality and social justice.

### **OUTPUTS**

In order to achieve the above outcome, MenEngage Alliance will collectively work to ensure:

1. Country and regional networks have **increased capabilities and resources to coordinate** and facilitate meaningful engagement with MenEngage membership at country, regional and global levels.
2. Comprehensive MenEngage **membership strategy** developed and implemented, including induction to roles, responsibilities and processes for collaborations, to support the empowerment

of members to participate meaningfully in the Alliance and add value to their own work and that of the Alliance at a global level.

3. A comprehensive **youth leadership and engagement strategy** is developed and implemented to support meaningful engagement and leadership of young people across all pillars and priorities of the Alliance.
4. MenEngage Alliance **knowledge management & communications (KM&C) strategy** implemented and contextualised together with the country and regional networks to facilitate strengthened engagement of the members and partners of the Alliance.
5. MenEngage Alliance **knowledge products** on transforming masculinities and engaging men and boys in priority issues related to women's rights and gender justice developed and disseminated in multiple **languages** (at least EN, ES and FR) at country, regional and global levels.
6. **Webinars, virtual dialogues and workshops** organized together with the members and partners at national, regional and global levels.
7. A redesigned MenEngage Alliance **website**, with news updates, a resource database and **virtual spaces for members** to interact, is maintained and operated.
8. Active participation of members in MenEngage **online communities** on mutual priorities and interests, facilitating virtual connections for peer-to-peer exchange and learning.

Outcome 1.3: Increased cross-regional and cross-country collaborations among MenEngage Alliance members.

Interconnecting collective efforts across the Alliance informed by the concept of 'power-with', will be an essential focus during this strategic period, informed by our guiding commitments of feminist informed, decolonization, human rights and accountability (please refer to Section 2 above). We will work closely with the country and regional networks to strengthen and facilitate cross-regional and cross-country exchanges and the sharing of promising practices, experiences and challenges faced, in order to generate knowledge and expertise to strengthen network building and joint actions.

Building on our efforts in the last strategic period, we will continue to coordinate and strengthen various working groups and learning circles (including the SRHR for all, LGBTIQ+ rights, youth leadership and engagement, militarism and masculinities, and climate justice groups). This approach of interconnected organizing will help to strengthen the Alliance as a cross-border and global community of practice and politicize the agenda of transforming patriarchal masculinities and engaging men and boys in gender equality among MenEngage Alliance members and partners.

As the leading feminist international social change network working to transform patriarchal masculinities and engage men and boys in gender equality, we are uniquely positioned to play a convening role and facilitate cross-country and regional collaborations, including through symposia, thematic consultations, dialogues and online spaces for interaction. MenEngage Alliance membership covers a wide range of interventions, programmes and advocacy areas, reflecting the importance the network gives to strengthening an intersectional approach to women's rights, gender and social justice and to bringing together practitioners and researchers across a range of sectors, issues and countries. MenEngage Alliance believes that strengthening dialogue through the creation of such spaces, will in turn support the optimum use of existing resources and create an approach to decision making and agenda setting through dialogue, debate and the prioritization of regional and country level contextualization.

## OUTPUTS

In order to achieve the above outcome during the period of 2021-24, MenEngage Alliance will collectively work to ensure:

1. MenEngage **Cross-Regional Networks approaches** established and operational to facilitate information and knowledge sharing among members on transforming masculinities and engaging men and boys in promoting gender equality and human rights of all women, girls and people of diverse gender identities.
2. Existing and new **issue-based working groups and committees** of the Alliance coordinated and strengthened, including participation of members in these groups, at country, regional and global levels.
3. **Collective framing, positions and differences on issues** are communicated in accessible ways that foster collective engagement with, learning around key topics and joint agenda setting on key issues and priorities at country, regional and global levels.
4. Cross-country, cross-regional and international **campaigns and joint initiatives** among members initiated and supported.
5. **Symposia, colloquiums and conferences** organized together with the members and partners at national, regional and global levels.

Outcome 1.4: Improved engagement and influence of members in MenEngage Global planning and decision making.

Enabling and building good relationships based on trust, cooperation, and the spirit of solidarity has proven essential for the Alliance to move forward and contribute to change. We will focus on improving meaningful engagement of members, which in turn will influence the decision making processes, agenda-setting and programming of the Alliance at the global level. MenEngage Global will increase transparency in decision making, and membership engagement in the planning and monitoring of its activities.

## OUTPUTS

In order to achieve the above outcome during the period of 2021-24, MenEngage Alliance will collectively work to ensure:

1. MenEngage **members are regularly informed** about the activities and decisions of MenEngage Global.
2. **MenEngage Global plans, reports and budgets** are easily accessible for members and partners; and all publications are available in multiple languages (EN, ES, FR - see also other relevant Outcomes related to publishing content).
3. MenEngage Alliance **Theory of Change and Strategic plan** are well disseminated among the membership for further contextualization and implementation at country, regional and global levels.
4. Periodic **Members Assembly** meetings & **Global Board elections** organized together with the country and regional network members, including facilitating leadership of members in this process.
5. MenEngage members have avenues to influence the strategic direction and decision making of the **MenEngage Global Board**, including via Regional Networks' representation on the Board; and members can listen-in to Board meetings [except for discussions that are in-camera].



## **Result area 2: Accountable Policy Advocacy and Political Voice**

**Laws, policies and political discourse on gender equality and human rights of all women and girls and people of diverse gender and sexual identities include analyses and approaches to transform patriarchal masculinities and the roles of men and boys.**

Legal and policy change to promote and protect the human rights of women and LGBTQIA+ individuals continues to be a significant focus of women's rights and LGBTQIA+ movements. Patriarchal, homophobic and transphobic law and policy reinforces and reflects patriarchal masculinities, and organizations working with men as agents of change to transform patriarchal masculinities have a role to play in supporting the efforts of women's rights and LGBTQIA+ movements to change such law and policy. Many MenEngage Alliance members are involved in supporting policy advocacy and in speaking out against the manifestations of patriarchal political cultures in their societies. As the discussion of political context in section 1.2.1 makes clear, growing authoritarianism and patriarchal backlash threatens many legislative and policy gains that have been won. Working in solidarity with women's rights and LGBTQIA+ movements to defend and advance these gains is therefore an important task for gender transformative work with men and boys.

The Evaluation of the Strategic Plan 2017-20 recognizes the progress over the period in advancing MenEngage Alliance's collective vision of interconnected advocacy and points to numerous examples of successful policy influencing by the Alliance, in particular at the global level. It recognises the steady strengthening of the Alliance's voice in global advocacy on women's rights, gender equality and the engagement of men and boys, supporting SRHR, women's rights and gender justice advocacy. The Alliance has built relationships with policy and decision makers in UN agencies and governments, delivered political statements at global policy making events, and provided concrete policy recommendations, building on the work of members. MenEngage Alliance has organized dozens of joint agenda-setting events with UN agencies, governments and civil society members and partners. Through this the Alliance has made significant contributions to the increased integration of language on engaging men and boys in the agreed conclusions in the annual Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) to Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development (SDGs) to Human Right Council Resolutions. Importantly, the language formulations at CSW have gradually become more gender transformative- though there is still a long way to go- demonstrating that efforts to consolidate advocacy structures and implement an interconnected advocacy strategy over the last strategic period have begun to yield results, and that we have begun to collectively develop a stronger, more political policy agenda.

At the same time, the Evaluation highlights that advocacy achievements, advocacy knowledge products, examples of policy change and frameworks to assess policy need to be better communicated with the membership to support their own advocacy efforts. In addition, further politicization of the Alliance's agenda needs to occur in order to contribute to intersectional feminist agendas and movements and step up to today's policy challenges.

The Alliance has also consolidated its body of knowledge on advocacy, including a comprehensive global mapping of the international normative framework on patriarchal masculinities and engaging men and boys, and policy briefs on key thematic and policy frameworks. We will further build on the national policy case studies, through a methodological design process which tests a policy against the Alliance's central advocacy agenda: feminist-informed, human-rights based, gender transformative, intersectional and accountable. Over the next strategic period, these policy assessment tools will be adapted, shared and disseminated to create opportunities for members at regional and national level to advance more

strategic policy advocacy, utilizing global frameworks and analysis to compel accountability of policymakers in their own contexts. Evidence-based advocacy will be fostered, resulting in better-informed policy asks and agendas. Better systems for crowdsourcing the expertise of the membership to provide analysis and technical inputs, and drafting political rapid response statements will be developed and implemented.

Another important step in our joint advocacy, has been the Alliance's conceptualization and implementation of 'accountable advocacy' principles at global level, and increasingly at regional levels:

### **What is Accountable Advocacy?**

*Accountable advocacy* can be understood as the application of our accountability standards and guidelines in our work on policy advocacy, being cognizant of, and actively working to counteract, patriarchal power dynamics that may arise from the inclusion and uptake of the agenda on transforming patriarchal masculinities and engaging men and boys in gender equality and/or as organizations working to advance this work with men and boys.

Fundamentally, it seeks to propel the politicization of the work through our advocacy efforts so it can stand up to the critical task of serving as a complementary strategy in the dismantling patriarchal power inequalities and unjust social norms. This is particularly relevant in the global context of backlash on women's rights, rising fundamentalism, authoritarianism, militarism and nationalism. As the COVID-19 crisis unfolds, climate change advances, and the unbridled expansion of neoliberal capitalism poses a threat to our democracies, our engagement and participation in political advocacy must be centered on working in political alignment, solidarity and partnership with the broader women's rights, feminist, SOGIESC/LGBTQIA+ and social/environmental justice advocacy movements and agendas.

Vital to accountable advocacy in practice is to honor and stand in solidarity with longstanding struggles led by feminist, LGBTQ+ and other social justice movements for political and systemic change, using our access to political space to support feminist leadership and voices and at times, and to directly amplify and advocate for the most challenging issues within the gender/social justice agendas. It has also meant advancing intersectional feminist approaches and countering the replication of all patriarchal, neo-colonial or oppressive dynamics in our advocacy efforts at country, regional and international levels.

Through this strategic approach we aim to continue advancing our relationship and trust building and our engagement in feminist agenda-setting spaces and collectives at global level, contributing our added value to these processes. We will seek to support members at all levels in conceptualizing and working towards accountable advocacy, in order to create partnerships and synergies with gender and social justice advocates in all contexts and harness 'power-with' for change.

Responding to calls by feminist movements for feminist systems change, the Alliance will begin an in-depth exploratory and capacity building process on feminist systems change over the next strategic period, with global, regional and cross-regional processes to crowdsource inputs to the Kigali/Ubuntu Declaration, which will seek to address feminist political agendas and the Alliance's unique contribution from a men and masculinities lens. The Alliance will develop a process for dissemination and adoption of the declaration, so as to create buy-in for this guiding political document.

Outcome 2.1: Strengthened capabilities and mechanisms to engage in joint accountable advocacy actions at country and regional levels among MenEngage members and partners.

MenEngage Alliance will seek to build on the vision of its interconnected advocacy strategy in the next strategic period. The strategy will be used to articulate and sharpen the Alliance's strategic thinking on our collective political agenda and pathways of change through evidence based advocacy and articulation with gender, social and environmental justice agendas. We seek to deepen our interconnected advocacy strategy by supporting the establishment of regional advocacy working groups able to carry out agenda-setting and working to develop contextual regional advocacy plans, in order to better articulate bottom-up engagement with specific regional and national advocacy spaces and processes. In addition, we will support the national networks with their advocacy strategies to ensure members at all levels have increased advocacy capacities. Capacity strengthening at regional and national level and cross-regional sharing will yield a rich environment to nurture the Alliance's continued maturation as a collective working towards policy advocacy at all levels.

As we look ahead, we will work to bring the learnings and tools that we have developed over the last 4 years to regional and country level advocacy, so that this serves in strengthening our 'roots', the Alliances' regional and country networks, while also linking country and regional level advocacy to global processes. We will develop tools for utilizing advocacy outcomes at global level to push for national and regional change and build members' skills in analyzing policies at national, regional and global level. Challenges and lessons learned in establishing regional advocacy structures and joint agendas will be shared in order to support other regions and countries.

## OUTPUTS

In order to achieve the above outcome during the period of 2021-24, MenEngage Alliance will collectively work to ensure:

1. MenEngage members', including youth leaders from across the regions, **understanding and capacities on accountable and evidence-based advocacy** strengthened and mobilized around policy change at country and regional levels.
2. **Youth activists** are supported to develop their capacities on accountable advocacy and are engaged in the advocacy activities of the Alliance at all levels.
3. **Regional and national advocacy strategies** are developed and implemented with the regional advocacy working groups and networks.
4. **Regional-network advocacy working groups (R-AWGs)** are facilitated and connected across regions for mutual learning and strategizing, as envisioned in the Alliance's interconnected advocacy strategy [see Outcome 2.2].
5. **Policy assessment and monitoring tools [scorecards]** to determine promising practices and challenges in policy design, development and implementation are contextualised, made available and implemented by members at country and regional levels.
6. **Contextualization, translation and application of relevant international and regional normative frameworks** such as HRC 35/10, is strengthened at country and regional levels through a concerted communications strategy.

7. MenEngage members have access to **international normative frameworks language mapping analysis and knowledge products** (CEDAW, Beijing, ICPD, HRC Resolutions, Agenda 2030, UNSCR 1325) through a concerted communications strategy.

Outcome 2.2: Increased joint accountable advocacy actions among MenEngage members and strategic partners at country, regional and global levels.

MenEngage Alliance aligns its policy agenda with women's rights, SRHR, LGBTIQ+ rights and social justice movements, to support progressive outcomes on gender equality and women's rights by adding value through transforming patriarchal masculinities, male supremacy and unjust gender norms. In this strategic period, we will work to realise the implementation of our Interconnected Advocacy Strategy; including its multi-directional and transformative nature, thereby ensuring that global policies support norms transformation at the local level, and country and regional advocacy informs global advocacy.

We will continue convening members and partners on various priority issues, to support the synthesizing of knowledge and information on women's rights, gender equality and social justice, especially sexual and reproductive health and rights, VAW/GBV, unpaid care work, LGBTIQ+ rights, youth leadership, and peace and security. With support from expert members and the advocacy working group, we will package this knowledge in ways that inspire and support policy and law-makers to take up evidence-based, gender transformative approaches in the problem-analysis, development and implementation of policies and laws. MenEngage Alliance will build on progressive resolutions and outcomes from key global policy frameworks such as the SDGs, BPfA and CSW, CPD, HRC resolutions and other human rights frameworks.

## OUTPUTS

In order to achieve the above outcome during the period of 2021-24, MenEngage Alliance will collectively work to ensure:

1. The MenEngage joint agenda, the **Ubuntu/Kigali Declaration and Call to Action**, is shared, and informs the advocacy work of the membership.
2. **MenEngage Global Advocacy strategy** in place and implemented with the **global Advocacy Working Group (AWG)**.
3. **Policies, laws and statements** by policymakers on gender equality, women's rights and social justice **are monitored, analyzed and synthesized**, by MenEngage Alliance and members and partners at global, regional and country levels
4. MenEngage members' **participation in policy-making fora** at the global, regional and national levels facilitated, including CPD, CSW, High Level Political Forum (HLPF), regional intergovernmental processes, and, joint feminist groups and network mobilization.
5. **Strengthened partnerships and joint policy advocacy actions** with women's rights, LGBTQIA+ rights and social justice **civil society advocates** and movements.
6. MenEngage Alliance **policy analysis, advocacy briefs and statements** developed and broadly disseminated in multiple languages (EN, ES, FR) at global, regional and country levels, based on evidence emerging from the field and the work of our members and partners (**See Result area 3 for more information**)
7. **Policy and law-makers are supported** by MenEngage Alliance and members in their policy development around SRHR, women's rights and gender justice at global, regional and country levels

8. Global, regional and national **decision and policy makers are held to account for upholding human rights and international commitments** with collective policy advocacy, together with women's rights, LGBTIQ+ rights and social justice networks and movements.

Outcome 2.3: MenEngage Alliance takes vocal and visible stance to challenge patriarchal masculinities and advocate for gender equality and social justice

In the next strategic period, we will work to strengthen our collective voice and positions through advocacy and campaigning efforts on issues confronting intersectional feminist and LGBTIQ+ movements, in particular by speaking out against the institutional and ideological expressions of patriarchal masculinities, male supremacy and unjust gender and social norms at all levels. The Alliance will foster our advocacy capacity and campaigning approaches in order to meet our vision to more fully support and interconnect with a wider array of gender and social justice agendas and movements. Building on various exploratory processes carried out in the previous years (*especially on GBV prevention, SRHR for all, SOGI Learning Circle, Militarism and Masculinities Learning Circle, climate justice and youth leadership*) we will utilize the rich expertise of our members, as well as its strategic partners, in order to become more visible and vocal on national, regional and global gender and social justice issues.

## OUTPUTS

In order to achieve the above outcome during the period of 2021-24, MenEngage Alliance will collectively work to ensure:

1. Strengthened **consultative capacity mechanisms** across MenEngage Alliance to collectively analyse and articulate responses to human rights violations **in a timely manner**.
2. MenEngage Alliance **issue-based policy advocacy statements and campaign messages** developed and broadly disseminated at global, regional and country levels.
3. Application of the Alliance's **Knowledge management and communications strategy** to strengthen advocacy, enhance accountability, visibility and public positioning on the priority issues. (See also Outcomes 1.2 and 2.1)
4. Strengthened **public positions** of MenEngage Global Alliance and our key partners on gender equality and women's rights, LGBTIQ+ rights and social justice issues, including via op-eds, blog posts and articles.

## Result Area 3: Effective and Strengthened Programming

**MenEngage Alliance members and partners work as a community of practice for effective programming that transforms patriarchal masculinities and engages diverse constituencies of men and boys in promoting gender and social justice.**

The Evaluation of the 2017-20 Strategic Plan shows that MenEngage Alliance has contributed to the strengthening of members' capacities to design and implement effective programming on transforming patriarchal masculinities and male supremacy, and engaging men and boys in gender equality. It further highlights the need for strengthening systematic approaches to capturing and sharing promising practices and knowledge about programming. The Evaluation also recommends that a monitoring, learning and Evaluation approach be developed that enables the Alliance to better measure our impact on programming, in line with the Alliance's guiding commitments (see Section 2).

Over the last strategic period, understanding of the Alliance's accountability standards increased among members, which in some cases has led to changes in discourse and behaviour. However, the Evaluation emphasizes that understanding and implementation of the standards and guidelines, particularly at the national level, needs further strengthening. The Evaluation further highlights that the Alliance needs to be more responsive to changing political contexts, particularly around the growing patriarchal backlash against gender equality and justice and the rise of fundamentalisms and 'men's rights' groups and agendas. The Evaluation suggests that MenEngage Alliance collectively develops strategies and provides an alternative voice to counter anti-feminist mobilizations and efforts.

The context analysis in Section 1 identifies key challenges facing the work to transform masculinities and engaging men and boys in gender equality. As MenEngage Alliance, we believe that we have a responsibility to promote quality and effective gender transformative programming that contributes to dismantling patriarchy, first and foremost among our members and partners, and then influencing others in the field. For these reasons, fostering a community of practice among our diverse membership is paramount, enabling exchange and mutual learning, allowing ourselves to be critical of our work, and learn from mistakes and promising practices.

MenEngage members are doing outreach work with men and boys in communities, sharing with 'ordinary' men in compelling ways about masculinities and gender justice to both invite them to be part of the solution and to counter anti-feminist messaging from men's rights groups. Our work is not only calling men and boys *out* for their power and privileges, but also about calling men and boys *in* to be mobilized as change agents for gender justice. In the next strategic phase, we strive to seek answers to how to frame that, through the expertise and learning from the work of our members and partners at country, regional and international levels.

**Outcome 3.1: Increased access to knowledge and uptake of evidence-based approaches to transforming masculinities and working with diverse constituencies of men and boys among MenEngage Alliance members and partners.**

One of the barriers identified by the external Evaluation 2020 is the lack of documentation and access to evidence-based knowledge and information among members of the Alliance. We believe that continued learning is necessary to increase the quality of programming, and in the next strategic period will prioritize efforts to share knowledge and tools for strengthening gender transformative programming with men and boys.

We believe that we have reached a level of maturation in our programming and political stance, placing patriarchal power at the centre of our problem analysis, and deepening intersectional understanding of how gender interplays with inequalities on the basis of race, class, economic status, age, etc in our programming and evidence-based advocacy efforts. This next strategic phase is about theorizing the change, building the 'evidence' from the work our members do in the field. We see an added value in harvesting members's practice-based knowledge and building 'evidence' from the work our members do in the field. We believe these efforts will further support the decolonization of knowledge and leadership, as per the guiding commitments of the Alliance. In addition, our learning platforms will also serve as knowledge hubs that signpost members to knowledge about masculinities work found on other specialized sites.

## **OUTPUTS**

In order to achieve the above outcome during the period of 2021-24, MenEngage Alliance will collectively work to ensure:

1. **Promising practices and lessons from MenEngage members work** on implementing gender transformative work to engage men and boys in gender equality programming are identified, analysed, and shared with members and partners.
2. **Virtual knowledge hub** in place with resources from practice-based and academic knowledge, gathering evidence and making knowledge accessible to inform members' transformative work with men and boys, in multiple languages (EN, FR, ES).
3. **Peer-to-peer learning spaces** in place, where members from national and regional networks exchange knowledge, lessons learned and promising practices in order to elevate the quality of their work in communities.
4. **Thematic working groups and communities of practice** in place, including via virtual platforms, and better standardized mechanisms developed for forming and organizing thematic working groups.
5. **Partnerships with relevant institutions and individuals developed to support strengthening the theory and evidence base** of work to transform masculinities and engage men and boys in gender equality.
6. **M&E framework** for MenEngage Alliance in place, that enables learning on how MenEngage contributes to improved programming on the ground and includes collectively agreed core indicators of change (see also Section 4 on PME&L).

### Outcome 3.2: Strengthened understanding and application of MenEngage Accountability Standards, Core Principles and Code of Conduct among members and partners.

As a core principle of MenEngage Alliance, accountability involves the responsibility to consult closely with, listen to, take leadership from and partner equally with organizations and leaders representing those most targeted by gender injustice and patriarchal systems. Building the internal tools, capacities and processes that are necessary to deepen understanding and practices of accountability across all levels of the Alliance's work will continue to be a major focus for MenEngage Alliance. The MenEngage Alliance Accountability Standards and Guidelines<sup>276</sup> and Accountability Training Toolkit, guide the membership towards full accountability in programmatic, advocacy and partnership efforts.

We acknowledge our strategic position and leadership in the work on transforming patriarchal masculinities and engaging men and boys in gender equality, and therefore our responsibility in advancing accountable standards and practices at all levels and facilitating dialogue and collaboration with women's rights and other social justice movements. We acknowledge the concerns that have emerged around the growing attention to the work on engaging men and boys in gender equality and the challenges that it has brought to the fore, including around the distribution of financing and resources. We will closely work and support our members and partners to conduct their work in ways that are consistent with intersectional feminist principles and values, modeling gender justice inside the network in order to be more effective

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<sup>276</sup> *Accountability Standards are quality standards that help to do our work with men and boys in the right way, i.e. in a gender transformative way, feminist informed, human rights based, and in partnership with women's rights organizations and other social justice groups. By doing this, we reduce the chance of unintended consequences such as reproducing male dominance in our organizations and programs. Our Core Principles are based on our shared values and vision and they are relevant for all members of the Alliance despite differences in the local contexts and cultural dynamics. In some way, the Principles, along with our mission and vision, are the glue that connect us with a shared meaning. Despite our progress in developing and promoting an accountability framework, its uptake by members, specially at country level, is limited.*

in promoting women's rights and gender equality. In the next strategic period we will continue to support members and partners to contextualize and implement the Alliance's updated accountability standards and guidelines, and to build stronger partnerships at all levels with women's rights, gender and social justice, and broader human rights actors and movements.

## OUTPUTS

In order to achieve the above outcome during the period of 2021-24, MenEngage Alliance will collectively work to ensure:

1. MenEngage **Global Accountability Standards, Core Principles and Code of Conduct**, are updated through consultations with members and partners and disseminated among the Alliance members and partners.
2. **Contextualized regional and/or national MenEngage accountability standards** developed and implemented by members and partners at country and regional levels.
3. Members' **capacities strengthened** to understand and implement the global and/or contextualized accountability standards.
4. Insights and lessons learned on the implementation and effectiveness of the **Accountability Standards** by members and partners at all levels gathered and documented.
5. **Sexual Harassment policy** implemented by Global MenEngage Alliance and consulted as a guide by MenEngage regional and national networks.

Outcome 3.3: Strengthened collective actions by MenEngage members and partners to challenge backlash against gender justice and human rights - including by anti-feminist men and men's groups.

Anti-feminist men and so-called 'men's rights' narratives, are getting traction in some contexts and settings, particularly online and on social media. The external Evaluation 2020 highlights the need for an international network like MenEngage Alliance to be more vocal and take on responsibility to counter these narratives. We believe that being reactive to MRAs may not be the best way to use our time and energy as it may give undeserved attention to such extremist groups. However, debunking the myths that they spread may be necessary as well as a closer monitoring of their movements to assess when we should speak up.

In order for us to be effective, it will be imperative to learn from what our members and partners in feminist movements are doing. We will bring together members and partners to discuss promising examples and strategic approaches to challenge backlash, which will inform our actions. Based on these discussions, we will develop a strategy to support members as they continue their engagement with the "man on the street", and those who are either uninterested in or opposed to gender equality MenEngage Alliance will coordinate with members to deepen their analysis of the discourse promoted by these groups and identify effective communication strategies and tools to proactively put forward a counter-narrative to these regressive voices. Throughout these processes we will seek to move away from NGO jargon and simplify our language so that it resonates more broadly and supports in bringing more people into this collective struggle.

## OUTPUTS:

In order to achieve the above outcome during the period of 2021-24, MenEngage Alliance will collectively work to ensure:



1. **Learning initiative organized and strategy developed** on how to better understand and respond to backlash from a feminist-informed men and masculinities perspective
2. **Feminist critical analysis of men's rights and/or anti-feminist movements and related discourses** is synthesized and disseminated.
3. **Lessons from how members and partners are confronting** men's rights and conservative, anti-feminist messaging and mobilization are gathered and communicated.
4. **Countering backlash and MRAs strategy implemented** on how to better understand and respond to backlash from a feminist-informed men and masculinities perspective.
5. MenEngage Global is **vocal on countering anti-feminist narratives**, including by elevating messages from members and partners doing such work.

## **Result area 4: Strengthened Movement-Building Approaches**

**MenEngage Alliance contributes to and acts in solidarity with gender and social justice movements.**

Significant social change to address entrenched inequalities and patriarchal hierarchies depends on progressive organizations coming together in a broad movement for structural change. Recent years have witnessed an upsurge in such movement activism and protest in response to the patriarchal backlash discussed in Section 1. There is a growing recognition within the “men for gender equality” field that an important aspect of gender transformative work with men and boys is acting in solidarity with and elevating efforts by women's rights and LGBTQIA+ organizations to build and strengthen broad-based movements for gender justice. The Alliance's Theory of Change outlines this aspiration to become a social change network that acts in solidarity with women's rights organizations, LGBTQIA+ organizations and movements for intersectional feminism and gender justice more broadly.

The 2017-2020 Evaluation highlights the effective work that MenEngage Alliance has done in building partnerships with women's organizations and UN agencies. The report also highlights that more efforts are required to build effective partnerships with LGBTQIA+ networks and organizations. The Evaluation assesses that the Alliance has begun to take a more intersectional approach to its work, for example engaging in issues of climate and racial justice, and to build partnerships that reflect this vision. However, it is noted that the role of the Alliance in terms of movement building is not as clear, and while there are frequent dialogues with other movements (especially with the feminist movement) these are largely ad-hoc, not systemic alliances or consistent collaborations.

We believe that intersecting identities based on gender identity, sexual orientation, race, age, class, caste, ethnicity, nationality, religion, ability and other factors combine to compound inequality and oppression. We value the diversity of our world, and cannot address these intersecting injustices in isolation. We commit to promoting social and economic inclusion through meaningful participation, deepened partnerships, and joint actions among social justice movements. We will prioritize realizing our aspiration as outlined in the Theory of Change to be a social-change network and internal movement building efforts. By doing so we believe that we will be able to make significant and systematic contributions to the building of movements that will act in solidarity to feminist, LGBTQIA+ and social justice movements. We believe that strong and strategic partnerships between gender justice organizations and broader social justice movements are a must, if we are to address the multi-faceted issues of gender and power inequalities, human rights of all women, girls and people of diverse gender identities. It has never been as urgent to

ensure that all the networks and movements working for equality and justice join hands to form cross-movement alliances in order to ‘push back against the push-back’, and transform, and ultimately eradicate, patriarchy and male privilege. Furthermore, the re-construction of gender equal and just societies implies the symbolic and material creation of a new paradigm; it also implies the capacity to visualize what this new paradigm looks like in different complex social and cultural realities. Our increased movement-building orientation in our work over the coming years, will be informed by - and therefore tested on an ongoing basis against - the guiding commitments as outlined in Section 2.

Achieving gender equality and social justice is intrinsically linked to advancements in other feminist, social and identity-based struggles for justice, such as sexual orientation and gender identity/LGBTQIA+ rights, racial justice, climate justice, youth leadership and rights, child rights, sexual and reproductive health and rights for all, and (Dis)Ability Rights. It is also linked to struggles for justice, like economic justice, climate justice and the struggle for a demilitarized world. MenEngage Alliance believes in partnerships based on solidarity, equality and mutual trust among key constituencies in the field of women’s rights and gender justice, in order to deepen and diversify the Community of Practice to become effective, vibrant, interconnected and sustainable. In the period of 2021-24, we will work to strengthen the Alliance’s “movement building orientation”, and to carry out activities, programs and initiatives, in ways that are built on joint understanding of what movement building entails (as opposed to NGO-style project implementation).

Building on Result Area 2, through strengthening accountable practices and meaningful partnerships, we will promote equal rights, equitable access to resources and radical inclusion. MenEngage Alliance recognizes the valuable perspectives of missing voices whose experiences have been absent from decision making spaces. In the next four years, we will work to fully understand and unpack core intersectional feminist principles and practices of solidarity, inclusion and respect for our shared humanity.

**Outcome 4.1: Strengthened understanding of and commitment to collaborative work with intersectional gender justice and social justice movements among MenEngage Alliance members.**

In order to contribute to movement building, we need to first ‘get our own house in order’, and strengthen member’s collective capability to be meaningful allies to these movements. We will focus on developing understanding of partnerships and relationships informed by modesty, a ‘let-them-lead’ approach, listening, asking the right questions, decolonized approaches and accountability. We will seek to ensure that members see the need for and feel committed to collaborative work in movements. One key way we seek to do this is through leading by example in our partnerships and modelling effective partnerships and the global level. We will strengthen the framework of accountability in our movement building and unpack what this means in an ongoing process.

Over this period, we will work to build understanding among the membership that our work is broader than gender issues in isolation, as outlined in the intersectional agenda of the MenEngage Theory of Change. We will work together with the membership to strengthen the understanding of the ToC and the linked forms of oppression which fuel gender injustices.

## **OUTPUTS**

In order to achieve the above outcome during the period of 2021-24, MenEngage Alliance will collectively work to ensure:

1. **Strengthened movement building orientation among MenEngage members, including capabilities on building meaningful relationships and accountable partnerships** with diverse feminist and social justice activists, organizations, networks and movements at country, regional and global levels.
2. **Strengthened knowledge and understanding of the MenEngage Theory of Change**, including solidarity with feminist and social justice networks and movements, among members at country, regional and global levels.
3. **Tools and resources on movement building approaches** on intersectional gender and social justice movements developed and disseminated, together with relevant organizations and movements by 2024.

Outcome 4.2: Strengthened partnerships and solidarity actions with Feminist, LGBTQIA+, Youth, Racial-, Indigenous-, Economic- and Climate Justice organizations, networks and movements by MenEngage Alliance and members.

The shaping of a politicized agenda within MenEngage will be informed by the partnerships that we build. There is a need to expand which voices we listen to and which leaders and organizations we engage with. We are continuing on the path of the past years to build partnerships with women's rights, feminist and SRHR organizations. We will strengthen what we have somewhat improved in the past strategic period: reaching out to LGBTQIA+ actors more; and youth actors more.

New for us will be broadening to other socio-economic justice issues. The context analysis has highlighted the importance of anti-racism, decolonization, economic justice and climate justice. We will reach out to actors in relevant movements, and seek to have conversation so that we can learn from them, and ask how we can support them.

Informing our approach to partnership building is showing up in solidarity, and accountability. Through this result area we seek to learn from movements to inform MenEngage's feminist systems change approach (see also Result Area 2 on how this will inform advocacy).

Under this outcome we also include commitment to develop a more consolidated approach to climate change and justice, by developing an action plan on: a) mitigating our own environmental impact; b) developing our position on climate justice and the links/added value of 'men and masculinities'; and c) becoming active/vocal on the issue at various levels (see also Outcome 4.3).

## OUTPUTS

In order to achieve the above outcome during the period of 2021-24, MenEngage Alliance will collectively work to ensure:

1. **Partnerships and solidarity with key leaders and constituencies** in the women's rights, LGBTQIA+ rights and social justice fields established, including interconnectivity of the partnership across country, regional and global levels.
2. **Collaborative actions** with key women's rights, LGBTQIA+ rights, and social justice organizations and networks are facilitated at country, regional and global levels.
3. **Promising examples and lessons learnt** from partnerships and collaborative actions at country, regional and global levels **documented and disseminated** among members and partners.

Outcome 4.3: Strengthened diverse SOGIESC inclusive organizing, approaches and politics, together with relevant organizations, networks and movements by MenEngage Alliance and members.

MenEngage Alliance is a coalition of diverse members, including those of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions and sex characteristics (SOGIESC). We recognize the valuable perspectives of missing voices whose experiences have been largely absent from decision making spaces, and seek to proactively invite and include in the Alliance, particularly LGBTQIA+ advocates and strategic thinkers. We will strengthen the inclusion of these voices in our leadership and decision making.

The Evaluation found we have more to do to strengthen our work to defend and protect the human rights of LGBTQIA+ individuals, whose discrimination and rights violations are rooted in gender inequalities and the patriarchal system. MenEngage Alliance will continue working to dismantle heteronormativity within the Alliance. In doing so we seek to contribute more broadly to this goal in the gender and social justice fields. To inform this we must work through meaningful partnership building and allyship with LGBTQIA+ individuals, organizations and movements and follow their lead.

We will continue the work started in the previous strategic period, to unpack and gain better understanding of the root causes of violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, including deeply entrenched stigma and prejudice reinforced by discriminatory laws and regulations that foster climates in which discrimination, violence and abuse are condoned and perpetrated with impunity.

Through our network approach we seek to support members and networks in building trust and meaningful partnerships with LGBTQIA+ and diverse SOGIESC organizations and movements, particularly those led by people of color and in the global south.

## OUTPUTS

In order to progress on the above outcome during the period of 2021-24, MenEngage Alliance will collectively work to advance:

1. **Partnerships with LGBTQIA+ and diverse SOGIESC organizations strengthened** at all levels (see Outcome 4.2).
2. **Representation of LGBTQIA+ voices in MenEngage Alliance leadership and decision making** increased (see also our commitment under Outcome 1.1).
3. **Safer space/s for LGBTQIA+ identified people in MenEngage Alliance** to connect and discuss experiences with each other and inform MenEngage's work organized and appreciated by participants. (Example: caucus spaces)
4. **Learning initiative on LGBTQIA+ and diverse SOGIESC issues** and their links with gender, patriarchy, masculinities, and the roles of men and boys developed and implemented with MenEngage members and partners, including:
  - a. **Dialogues with LGBTQIA+ and diverse SOGIESC organizations and activists** to inform learning organized.
  - b. **Capacity strengthening activities** on diverse sexual orientation, gender identities and expressions and sexual characteristics (SOGIESC) organized with members and partners at national, regional and global levels.

- c. **Knowledge products** on critical analysis of the fundamental relationship between the struggles for gender justice, patriarchal masculinities, roles of men and boys, and LGBTQI+ rights developed and disseminated among the members and partners of the Alliance.
- d. **Cross-regional and country learning exchange and activities** organized to facilitate sharing, elevating and celebrating gender non-conforming and trans experiences within the Alliance.
5. **MenEngage Regional networks have contextualized** knowledge products, plans and activities for being more gender diverse and inclusive.
6. **Language in MenEngage Global materials is more inclusive of diverse SOGIESC**; and MenEngage Regional and Country networks have contextualized conversations and language.

## Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

While a number of organizations who work to transform patriarchal masculinities and engage men and boys for gender justice, including members and partners of the Alliance, have developed Evaluation tools, there is a broad need to assure that MenEngage Alliance's planning, monitoring, evaluation and learning (PME&L) processes are inspired and informed by intersectional feminist approaches, principles and discourses around PME&L.

Throughout this Strategic Plan for 2021-24, we are committing to strengthening a learning culture within the Alliance. This recommendation from the 2017-2020 Evaluation is reflected in Outputs that focus on improving communication about promising practices, achievements and learnings from Global and Regional to better support country and local membership in their networks and leadership development (RA 1), accountable advocacy (RA2), programming (RA 3) and movement building (RA4). It is also reflected in our approach to facilitating dialogue and learning initiatives, such as collective learning in the face of urgent threats (RA3&4).

Seeing to the PME&L of MenEngage Global Alliance is the responsibility of the Global Board, comprised of representatives of the membership, through at-large organizations and regional networks representatives. The PME&L activities are implemented by the Global Secretariat.

The procedures of the MenEngage Global Alliance will continue (as per 2012-2020) to contain the following elements, and will include a few new elements taken as learnings from the 2017-2020 Evaluation:

- M&E framework for MenEngage Alliance in place, that enables learning on how MenEngage contributes to improved programming on the ground and includes collectively agreed core indicators of change (see also Outcome 3.1).
- Annual plans and annual reports of MenEngage Global Alliance, developed by the GS and presented to the Global Board for their inputs and approval;
- Annual budgets and financial reports, accompanying the narrative plans and reports;
- Annual external financial audit;
- Annual plans and reports of the regional networks, presented by the regional coordinators and developed with their Regional Steering Committees, based on the regional work plans (Outcome 1.1). These will feed into the global plans and reports as per above;
- Monitoring of financial support by the GS, if applicable, to any of the regional or country networks;
- Quarterly Global Governance Meetings (one in-person and three conference calls) of the Global Board, to review progress and monitor MenEngage Global Alliance's work;

- Ongoing monitoring by the Global Co-Chairs with the Governance Committee of the overall progress and quality implementation of the annual work plans, in line with the multi-annual strategic plan;
- Annual membership surveys, building on the survey conducted as part of the 2017-2020 Evaluation. This will include members periodic survey on the use etc of Accountability standards (see Outcome 3.2);
- 2021-2024 external progress evaluation, to be initiated early in 2024, and to inform the development of the next strategic plan for 2025-2029.

The Alliance's PME&L system will be informed by our identity as an international social change network (in contrast to an NGO), including setting parameters on capturing the progress and learnings from the implementation of the Strategic and Annual Plans, and Theory of Change. This will continuously inform the operations and functioning of the Alliance. The PME&L framework will analyze the interconnections between the Alliance's Theory of Change, Strategic Plan and learnings from the implementation of the plans throughout the years, as well as their role in facilitating the functioning of the Alliance as a social change network.

The PME&L System will be closely aligned with the Alliance strategic planning processes with the regional networks and membership. These collective processes are as important for networks building and as products of these processes. This will include systematizing the planning and management processes and approaches into the learning agenda. The PME&L System will also connect with the accountability framework of the Alliance, including the updated core principles, code of conduct and accountability standards.