

MEN. MASCULINITIES. AND CHANGING POWER

A DISCUSSION PAPER ON
ENGAGING MEN IN GENDER
EQUALITY FROM BEIJING
1995 TO 2015



MenEngage

boys and men for gender equality





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IN COLLABORATION WITH



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, there have been tremendous advances in the rights and well-being of women and girls. We are still far from achieving equality between women and men, but by many measures—including health, education, political participation, and income—we are closer to it than we were 20 years ago. As envisioned in the Beijing Platform for Action, one critical piece for advancing the gender equality agenda is engaging men and boys. Beyond just the nominal or symbolic involvement of men, the Beijing framework envisions male engagement as a necessary means to challenge the structures, beliefs, practices, and institutions that sustain men's aggregate privileges, as well as to address inequalities between women and men.

In this discussion paper, we seek to start a dialogue about moving forward with efforts that actively engage men and boys in challenging power dynamics in their own lives as well as in their communities and societies. To frame the discussion in this transformative approach to gender equality, this paper seeks to address the following questions:

- What are the linkages between gender, masculinities, and power? How do social and cultural norms about masculinities shape power relations and gender inequalities?
- How far has the global agenda developed since Beijing and Cairo, in terms of working with men as partners, advocates, and stakeholders in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment?
- How should we understand men's responsibilities and potential contributions to the gender equality agenda?
- What policies and programs have been implemented to include men in a shared vision of gender equality and to transform prevalent notions of masculinities? What has been the result? What are the remaining challenges?
- What are the persistent challenges in engaging men in the gender equality agenda?
- What are key policy and strategy recommendations for moving forward?

PART 1:

GENDER, POWER, AND MASCULINITIES

Throughout the world, there are still strong social and cultural norms that perpetuate power imbalances between men and women. While men usually have more agency than the women in their lives, men's decisions and behaviors are also profoundly shaped by rigid social and cultural expectations related to masculinity. Broadening the discussion about how gender norms affect both women and men helps us to better understand the complex ways that rigid gender norms and power relations burden our society, and to more effectively engage men and boys in reflections about inequalities and change.

Over the last two decades in Beijing, organizations and initiatives that focus on or are inclusive of men as active participants and beneficiaries of gender equality have proliferated in diverse areas, from the prevention of violence against women to the promotion of labor and trade union rights. Unfortunately, these efforts have generally been in the form of short-term projects, often only reaching relatively small numbers of men at a time, and often in contexts where social norms, policies, and other structural factors continue to limit the potential for broader transformations.

There are also still divergent understandings of the nature and extent of men's and boys' roles in the gender equality agenda. While common framings of men's roles as gatekeepers or partners reflect important dynamics and principles related to engaging men and boys, they do not fully capture their role or stake in gender equality. There is increasing evidence that we should be approaching men as stakeholders and co-beneficiaries

in advancing gender equality. In addition to broader ethical and social gains, men as individuals benefit from greater equality in the form of improved and healthier relationships with the women and girls in their lives, and more options in terms of their own experiences and behaviors.

In moving forward with efforts that engage men and boys, it is important to remember that change is not easy to achieve, particularly because challenging men's notions of masculinity may in some ways be akin to challenging their notions of self. Men's and boys' motivation and capacity to change are often also dependent on the extent to which peer networks, media messaging, public policy, opinion leaders and other influences continue to perpetuate certain messages about gender norms. Indeed, the paths by which men and boys come to support and live out gender equality are multiple and sometimes conflicting, with some based on self-interest, some on attitudes of protection (and thus potentially patriarchal), and others on a sense of gender justice and universal human rights. Our policies will be better informed, where men are concerned, if we understand these multiple paths rather than prescribe a single path to gender equality.

PART 2:

THE STATE OF MEN AND GENDER EQUALITY: CHALLENGES AND ADVANCES

Understanding men's attitudes, including how they have changed and their areas of resistance, is essential to moving these efforts forward. While gender inequality is still pervasive around the world, there is evidence of significant, positive changes in men's attitudes related to gender equality. This section of the paper provides an overview of prevalent attitudes and practices, and the continuing challenges to engaging men and boys in several areas critical to advancing gender equality, as well as examples of initiatives that have led to measurable changes in men's attitudes, behaviors, and relations with others. The specific areas discussed are: gender-based violence, education, domestic work and caregiving, employment and income, and sexual and reproductive rights and health.

PART 3:

THE WAY FORWARD

While there is increasingly widespread agreement that working with men and boys is a necessary part of achieving gender equality, there are also some continuing concerns regarding existing strategies and goals. There are two particularly salient areas that need to be addressed: the alignment of the work with men and boys vis-à-vis women's movements and efforts toward gender equality, and the increasingly visible backlash of organized groups of men who actively question and, in some cases, attempt to undermine the gender equality agenda.

Many activists and organizations engaging men and boys actively seek to align their work with women's movements, but there is a need for greater reflection on the part of feminist men regarding their own gender-based power, and how to ensure that women's leadership and voices remain the backbone of feminist discourse in these shared spaces. There is also a need for activists and organizations working with men to be vocal in their opposition to anti-feminist groups and movements. While these groups are a minority, they are visible in some settings, and sometimes actively seek to usurp the dialogue about gender relations and power inequalities.

PART 4:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

Engaging men and boys in gender equality is integral to the new global Post-2015 Development Agenda, and to maintaining the momentum on addressing gender inequalities, strengthening human rights, and promoting women's empowerment.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Shift our normative understanding of men's role within the broader agenda for gender equality.

While women's empowerment is essential to achieving gender equality, we must simultaneously engage men to be actively committed to redistributing power in both their personal lives and in larger spheres. Framing gender equality as something men have a stake in and can benefit from can be an effective way to motivate more men and boys to be involved. There is also a need for more research on the many ways in which men and boys are already moving toward gender equality, in order to identify ways to support and accelerate the change that is already happening.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Build and maintain alliances between men's work for gender equality and the women's rights fields and other social justice movements.

Leaders and organizations engaging men and boys should create ongoing dialogue and collaboration across the many diverse groups and movements involved in promoting gender equality.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Take work with men from the program and project level into policies and institutions.

Accelerating change requires reaching larger numbers of men and boys and changing systems and institutions. Given the critical role of public institutions (e.g., schools, the health sector, the workplace) in the creation and maintenance of gender norms, and their potential to reach large numbers of individuals, they provide particularly strategic locations for scaling up efforts to engage men and boys. Increasing the reach and impact of efforts with men and boys also entails mobilizing men to effect change via their leadership roles and holding them accountable for the support of change through these roles.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Develop, implement, and monitor policies to engage men in gender equality and build state capacity to implement them.

In addition to extending the number and reach of well-designed interventions, we need to push forward with institutional and governmental policies that address the social and structural determinants of gender inequalities. Equally important is the building of trained staff to implement these policies, as well ongoing public awareness campaigns to transform men's perceptions of gender roles.

Below are examples of specific policy recommendations for engaging men in gender equality:

- **Engaging men in the prevention of gender-based violence.** Integrated and well-formulated policies should include primary prevention targeting men and boys; policies to engage men and boys in making public spaces free of violence for women and girls; programs for male perpetrators that are integrated with the judicial sector; implementation of gun control; controls over alcohol sales; and legal, financial and psychosocial supports for survivors of violence.
- **Promoting gender equitable socialization at all levels of education, from early childhood education to the tertiary level.** Comprehensive, gender-transformative sexuality education should be an integral part of school curricula, addressing human rights, gender equality, and sexual health. Curricula should also challenge gender stereotypes and encourage critical thinking. There should be training and support for teachers and administrators to provide gender-sensitive learning environments.
- **Engaging men as fathers and caregivers.** In addition to more progressive paternity leave policies, there is also a need for ongoing public awareness campaigns and education to transform men's perceptions of gender roles. Similarly, publicly supported fatherhood-preparation courses and campaigns focusing on men's roles in the lives of children can address fathers' reported feelings of being unprepared for caregiving, and help men perceive the benefits of greater participation in family life.
- **Engaging men in supporting women's economic empowerment.** A key policy entry-point for engaging men in support of women's economic empowerment entails redistributing caregiving responsibilities, thereby ensuring that women have support in pursuing economic opportunities. Men also have an important role to play in advocating for and supporting policies that address inequalities in the workforce.
- **Engaging men as supportive partners, clients and positive agents of change in sexual and reproductive health and rights, and maternal, newborn and child health.** While we must continue to promote accessible sexual and reproductive health services and rights for women, we must also engage men and boys in transforming the rigid norms that shape sexual and reproductive health outcomes. School-based, comprehensive sexuality education that promotes critical reflection about gender norms is an essential component of engaging men and boys in sexual health. Policies should also seek to expand the availability and use of male contraception methods, and to create spaces for men in prenatal and child health services.

BOX 1

IMPACT OF GENDER INEQUALITIES ON WOMEN AND GIRLS: A GLOBAL SNAPSHOT

- Worldwide, almost one third of all women who have been in a relationship have experienced some form of violence by an intimate partner.¹ Women and girls account for three-quarters of all trafficking victims.²
- Globally, women and girls continue to lack access to essential health services and information. In low and middle-income countries, complications from pregnancy and childbirth are a leading cause of death among girls aged 15 to 19.³
- Girls and women represent two-thirds of the world's illiterate population.⁴ While more girls are attending primary school than ever before, gaps persist between girls' and boys' attendance in many regions.
- Globally, women devote 1 to 3 more hours per day to housework than men and dedicate 2 to 10 times the amount of time per day to care-work of children, elderly, and the sick compared to men.⁵
- On average, women in paid work earn 10 to 30 percent less than men.⁶ Women are also more likely to belong to informal economies, including home and domestic work.⁷
- Throughout the world, women are paid less for the same work as men and are less likely to hold leadership positions in companies and businesses. In the United States, women are just 4.6 percent of Fortune 500 CEOs and hold only 16.9 percent of Fortune 500 board seats.⁸
- Women comprise only 21.8 percent of national parliaments around the globe, despite virtually no legal restrictions on women running for public office.⁹

INTRODUCTION

The past 20 years have seen tremendous advances in the rights and well-being of women and girls. We are still far from equality between women and men, but by many measures—including health, education, political participation, and income—we are closer than we were 20 years ago. These changes have, to be sure, been extremely uneven, in terms of geography, social class, and many other factors, but they are real. As these advances and shortcomings have become evident, several key and burning questions have also emerged:

- To what extent have men and boys been involved in achieving gender equality?
- What difference has engagement of men and boys had in promoting gender equality?
- What needs to happen to fully engage men and boys as partners and stakeholders in moving toward equality for women and girls?

While there are many components necessary to achieve full gender equality, challenging the structures, beliefs, practices, and institutions that sustain men's aggregate privileges and inequitable norms is an essential piece. It is a piece that affects men and boys and cannot be accomplished without engaging them. However, despite the crucial role men and boys can play in efforts to promote women's rights and empowerment and gender equality, they are still a tremendously "untapped

resource."¹⁰ Throughout the world, there are still large numbers of men and boys who need to be engaged in efforts toward gender equality: from those who actively discriminate against or persecute women and girls or who are complicit in prevailing inequalities, to those who believe in gender equality and are already living it and who could—if encouraged in appropriate ways—become more visible proponents to other men of the benefits of gender equality.¹¹

Through this discussion paper, we seek to start a dialogue about moving forward with efforts to engage men and boys in gender equality and to achieve the outcomes called for in the Beijing Platform for Action that was adopted at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women. Since Beijing, there has been a significant amount of work done on engaging men and boys in gender equality. There have been important advances on many fronts, including broader understandings of the importance of engaging men and boys in gender equality, and a growing body of increasingly well-evaluated interventions and large-scale policy experiences that are apparently leading to some important changes in men's and boys' attitudes and practices, including more gender equitable workplaces and divisions of caregiving. **The results from these varied experiences have affirmed the tremendous potential and positive impacts of program-level efforts that engage men and boys and seek to**

transform attitudes, norms, and power dynamics, even as much more impact evaluation is needed of such approaches.

However, we still have far to go.

In addition to scaling up gender transformative policies and programs, there is a need to continue to evolve our understandings and approaches to engaging men and boys. As envisioned in the Beijing Platform for Action and the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994), engaging men and boys is a core part of transforming gender norms and the underlying power relations, structures, and systems that maintain inequalities between and among women and men. While some of the work with men and boys has applied this transformative framing, not all of it has, and even that which has, has not done so enough. **We need to more actively engage men and boys in interrogating and challenging power dynamics in their own lives as well as in their communities and societies more broadly.** We need to engage them in change at the individual level, in their relationships with partners, children, and friends, as well as at more structural levels, in their roles and capacities as teachers, corporate executives, union leaders, policy-makers, etc.

This paper seeks to address the following specific questions:

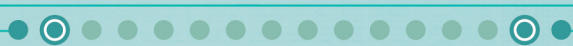
- What are the linkages between gender, masculinities, and power? How do social and cultural norms about masculinities shape power relations and gender inequalities?
- How far has the global agenda developed since Beijing and Cairo, in terms of working with men as partners, advocates, and stakeholders in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment?
- How should we understand men's responsibilities and potential contributions to the gender equality agenda?
- What policies and programs have been implemented to include men in a shared vision of gender equality and to transform prevalent notions of masculinities? What has been the result? What are the remaining challenges?
- What are the persistent tensions in engaging men in the gender equality agenda?
- What are key policy and strategy recommendations for moving forward?



PART 1



GENDER, POWER, AND MASCULINITIES



DEFINITIONS

Gender refers to the socially constructed attributes and roles associated with being male or female. These attributes and roles define what is expected, allowed, and valued in women and men. Gender is neither invariable nor biologically determined—it changes over time and across settings. Individuals learn and internalize gender-related attributes and roles from families and friends, in schools, communities, religious and cultural institutions, and from the media. Because gender is part of the broader socio-cultural context, it is experienced and expressed differently across various social identities, including political status, class, ethnicity, physical and mental disability, age, and other social classifications.¹²

Masculinity is the particular pattern of social behaviors or practices that is associated with ideals about how men should behave and their position withingender relations. Masculinity is a relational concept, defined in opposition to femininity and expectations about how women should behave (White). One of the more common features of masculinity is the equation of manhood with dominance, toughness, and risk-taking. However, as with femininities, there are multiple masculinities, which change over time and between and within settings.¹³ Some of these masculinities may hold more power and privilege than others: some may be considered exemplary; some may be socially marginalized.¹⁴

Power includes the ability to make decisions about one's life and the capacity to influence and/or effect desired goals. All relationships are affected by the exercise of power, which in turn is profoundly shaped by social identities, including gender, race, class, sexual orientation, age, religion, nationality, etc. Gender inequalities are defined by "power over," or controlling forms of power, whereas efforts to increase women's empowerment and promote gender equality seek to promote alternative forms of power: power to, power with, and power from within, which focus on using individual and collective strengths to work towards common goals without coercion or domination.¹⁵

Gender equality is about transforming the ways individuals experience and express power in their lives, relationships, and communities, and the power structures that shape the relations between women and men. It involves increasing individual autonomy and self-efficacy, and ensuring that individuals have equal opportunities to make choices in their lives and to participate in key domains of society.¹⁶ Although gender equality is most often associated with the advancement and empowerment of women, it is a much broader enterprise that seeks to advance societies as a whole by ensuring that, as noted by the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, "all human beings can develop and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles, and prejudices."¹⁷ To this end, moving toward gender equality also entails supporting individuals whose identities do not fit within the traditional gender binary.^{*} Although it is important to frame the significance and impact of gender equality broadly, we cannot lose sight of the fact that women and girls bear the brunt of gender inequalities. Throughout the world,

- Men's continued use of **coercion and violence against women** in private and public spheres, at individual and aggregate levels, is perhaps the starkest example of how these power

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^{*} Discussions about gender equality often frame gender as a binary between men and women, thereby reinforcing the misperception that all people identify with the gender they were assigned at birth. Transgender individuals, however, challenge this notion. The transgender spectrum encompasses a wide range of individuals, including transgender men, not assigned male at birth but who, like transgender women, may seek to transition socially and/or medically (a process to affirm their gender identities). It may also refer to gender non-conforming individuals who identify outside of the gender binary, and who may not be entirely comfortable with the labels of male or female (National Center for Transgender Equality, NCTE). In discussing gender-related power imbalances, it is therefore important to consider the additional layer of power imbalance between transgender and non-transgender individuals, whereby trans-identities are often stigmatized and transgender people made the targets of violence and legal, social, and economic subjugation (NCTE).

imbalances affect women's lives and agency.

- Within family settings in some developing countries, **men still often have the final say regarding the use of household resources**, women's and girls' health decisions, their physical mobility, and their access to educational opportunities.¹⁸
- In many settings, **men's unequal participation in family care work** and household tasks continues to be a barrier to women's work-life balance and their economic and other public endeavors.¹⁹ At even broader levels, men are still the **vast majority of leaders in government and the private sector** and maintain control of policy agendas and investment decisions that shape women's access and opportunities (as they also shape the access and opportunities that low income and less powerful women and men have).²⁰

Gender inequalities are constructed and perpetuated by unequal and unjust power relations between men and women, as well as among men and among women. **Truly transforming gender relations therefore entails addressing how rigid gender norms affect power relations between men and women as well as among men and among women.** Looking at how women's lives as well as men's are shaped not only by gender but also by other power differentials based on age, class, ethnicity, nationality, caste, religion, sexual orientation, and other social identities helps get us past the limitations of binaries to better understand the many textures and realities of men's and women's lives.²¹

While men usually have more agency than women in their lives, men's decisions and behaviors are also profoundly shaped by rigid social and cultural expectations

*related to masculinity, as well as by power imbalances which have costs for both them and the women and girls in their lives.*²² Throughout the world, gender roles compromise men's health by encouraging them to equate being "manly" with various risky behaviors, from multiple sexual partners and alcohol consumption to the use of physical aggression and the unwillingness to seek health services or emotional support. In addition to the obvious implications for men's own health and well-being, these behaviors—as in the case of unsafe sex and alcohol abuse—have grave consequences for the women and children in men's lives.

*For some men, the consequences of not conforming to certain masculine norms can also involve social ostracism and violence.*²³ Homophobia is a particularly salient and pervasive example of how narrow conceptions of manhood can shape power relations between men. In many settings around the world, homophobia is a central organizing principle in male socialization and is used as a means to keep boys and men "in line".²⁴ To identify or imply that a man or boy is not heterosexual is to impose "a label of ultimate contempt for anyone who seems sissy, untough, uncool".²⁵ From an early age, boys are often faced with the continual threat of being identified as gay if they stray from certain expectations of masculine behavior. Often, the label is accompanied by verbal bashings and physical aggression. Men who are, in fact, gay or who are perceived as gay often experience various forms of oppression and abuse at the hands of other men. Another widespread expression of masculine domination and violence over other men is the deliberate use of rape and various forms of humiliation in military, prison, and war contexts.²⁶

Further, while men as a group benefit from the association of masculinity and privilege and hold greater power than women, not all men are powerful.

Many men, particularly low-income and minority men, are marginalized and subordinated by traditional power structures.²⁷ The fact that many of the world's poorest men are also disempowered—albeit in different ways from women—compared to men with more income and better social positions is nearly always left out of gender analyses and discussions but is a central issue in terms of how men view their own sense of power, and whether they view themselves as allies or beneficiaries of gender equality. As Connell writes, "Class, race, national, regional, and generational differences cross-cut the category 'men,' spreading the gains and costs of gender relations very unevenly among men".²⁸ Men's experiences of powerlessness are harmful not only for them but also for the women in their lives. Studies have found, for example, that men's frustration with their perceived lack of power can lead them to adopt certain behaviors that give them a sense of power over others, including high-risk sexual behaviors and violence against female partners.²⁹ In contrast, however, there are also many situations where groups of men who feel disadvantaged by the existing power structures see their interest as more closely aligned with the women in their communities than with other men.³⁰ This reminds us that "men respond very diversely to gender-equality politics" and that power inequalities in gender relations must be considered in the context of broader power inequalities in society.³¹

While it is important to acknowledge that rigid gender norms carry costs for men and boys, we also need to be careful about how we articulate these costs in the broader context of

the gender equality agenda. *In short, gender inequalities fall overwhelmingly on women and girls. At the same time, the lives of men and boys are affected by gender and gender-related power inequalities that interact with other social inequalities. Rather than negating each other, there is a need to accept and understand that both of these are true and related.* In discussing the broad-reaching costs of gender norms, the intention is not to emphasize false parallels or equate men's and women's experiences of gender-related inequalities and violence.³² Nor is the intention to minimize men's stake in gender equality to their own interests such that we detract from the fact that women's struggle for gender justice is central to efforts for gender equality.³³ Rather, broadening the discussion about how gender norms affect both women and men helps us to better understand the many and complex ways that rigid gender norms and power relations burden our society and to more effectively engage men and boys in reflections about inequalities and change.³⁴

THE GLOBAL CONFERENCES OF CAIRO (1994) AND BEIJING (1995) AND WHAT THEY MEAN FOR MEN, MASCULINITIES, AND CHANGING GENDER RELATIONS

The key role of men and boys in achieving gender equality emerged as an issue in international discussions in the 1990s, most notably at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo and the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. The landmark documents that came out of the Cairo and Beijing conferences were driven by strong feminist movements and expressly recognized that women's empowerment and gender equality are central to achieving greater social justice,

peace and security, and sustainable development. They were also significant for drawing specific attention to the need to work with men and boys in promoting women's empowerment and gender equality. *Prior to Beijing and Cairo, major policy discussions and documents regarding gender equality had dedicated limited, if any, attention to the role of men and boys.* (But see Box 2 on CEDAW). If and when men and boys were featured in policy documents and discussions, it was often as the implied or named obstacles to women's struggle for equality—rarely were they identified as a potential or necessary part of the solution.³⁵

In the Beijing Declaration, governments expressed a commitment to "encourage men to participate fully in all actions towards equality".³⁶ This language and commitment marked a concerted shift in international discourse toward actively acknowledging and engaging men and boys as an integral part of achieving gender equality. *Beyond just the nominal or symbolic involvement of men, the Beijing framework envisioned male engagement as a necessary means to addressing inequalities between women and men.* The Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) emphasizes the need for a "transformed partnership" between women and men, one based on "the principle of shared power and responsibility... at home, in the workplace and in the wider national and international communities".³⁷ Additionally, the BPfA identifies various critical areas of public and private life where more attention to male engagement, in terms of redressing work and power balance, is needed, including but not limited to: (1) education, (2) socialization of children, (3) child care and housework (e.g., unpaid and paid care work), (4) sexual and reproductive health, (5) gender-based violence, and (6)

the balancing of work and family responsibilities. *The year before Beijing, the ICPD had also called for greater male involvement in bringing about gender equality in all spheres of life, including family and community life.*³⁸ The ICPD Plan of

Action emphasized that "changes in both men's and women's knowledge, attitudes and behavior are necessary conditions for achieving the harmonious partnership of men and women".³⁹

BOX 2

CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN (CEDAW)

Although Beijing and Cairo are generally viewed as the turning point in efforts to engage men and boys at the international level, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) helped pave the way for these articulations of men's role in gender equality.⁴⁰ Adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979, CEDAW is often described as the international bill of rights for women. It provides a framework for national action to end discrimination against women in social, economic, cultural, and political spheres. It was also the first international agreement to include specific language about the equal responsibilities of men and women in family life, and the importance of transforming social and cultural gender norms. Article 5 holds that states must take measures "to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women."

After Beijing and Cairo, the issue of engaging men and boys gained growing recognition and interest among the international community. A series of milestone meetings and policy agreements reaffirmed and expanded upon the importance of working with men, including, among others, the World Summit on Social

Development Programme of Action (1995); the Beijing+5 review process, and its review held in 2000; the 26th special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS (2001); and the 48th and 53rd sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women (2004) (see Box 3).

BOX 3

48TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN (CSW): ROLE OF BOYS AND MEN

One of the most formative post-Beijing discussions on men and boys emerged from the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) 48th session in 2004, which examined "The Role of Men and Boys in Achieving Gender Equality" as one of its priority themes. In preparation for the session, the UN Secretary-General issued a report that described the struggle for gender equality as a "societal responsibility that concerns and should fully engage men as well as women and requires partnerships between women and men."⁴¹ The report also stressed that "[m]en and boys have much to gain from increased gender equality, as they pay significant costs in terms of quality of life from the way gender relations are currently defined and practised."⁴²

In its Agreed Conclusions, the CSW reaffirmed that both men and women must participate in promoting gender equality and provided recommendations to continue and expand inclusion of men and boys in key areas, including: (1) the socialization and education of boys and young men; (2) the workplace and the sharing of family and care giving responsibilities; (3) the prevention of and response to HIV/AIDS; and (4) the elimination violence. The Agreed Conclusions are considered the first international policy document to systematically treat men and boys as agents in the gender-equality process, recognizing that men and boys can and do make contributions to gender equality in their many capacities and in all spheres of society.⁴³

Over the last two decades since Beijing, a consensus that gender equality requires both women's empowerment and men's engagement, and transformation of gender norms and power relations for both women and men has also taken root at national and local levels. Organizations and initiatives that focus on or are inclusive of men as agents for and active participants and beneficiaries of gender equality have proliferated

in diverse areas of public and private life, from prevention of violence against women to the promotion of labor and trade union rights.⁴⁴ Groups and networks of men across the globe, often in collaboration with women, are engaged in policy advocacy and public campaigns in support of gender equality.⁴⁵ (See Boxes 4 and 5).

BOX 4

MENENGAGE ALLIANCE

One manifestation of the increased attention and efforts toward engaging men and boys in gender equality has been the creation of MenEngage, a global network of more than 600 NGOs with regional coordinators in six regions of the world and country-level networks in 32 countries, and including UN Women, UNFPA and other partners. The network emerged as an effort to strengthen linking and learning; to improve the evidence base and field of practice; to articulate a common cause of men and boys working on/towards gender equality; and to create a set of core principles to guide and inform the growing field of men's activism for gender equality. Among its core principles are the maintenance of alliances with women's rights movements as well as keeping a feminist perspective, at the same time recognizing that men and boys are affected by rigid and harmful gender norms as well.

In 2009, the MenEngage Alliance organized the First "Global Symposium on Engaging Men and Boys in Gender Equality" in Rio de Janeiro. The Symposium was the first-ever global event dedicated specifically to the issue of engaging men and boys and brought together over 400 activists, researchers, and practitioners from nearly 80 countries. The outcome document, the Rio Declaration, expressed the shared desires and goals of the participants for a more equal world and is available at <http://menengage.org/rio-declaration>.

BOX 5

ACTIVISM TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Among the most visible and well-developed public efforts involving men's activism toward gender equality have been campaigns and movements to end the use of violence against women.

- The White Ribbon Campaign (WRC) is perhaps the most widespread campaign led by men to end men's violence against women. Started in 1991 by a group of men in Canada, WRC encourages men to wear white ribbons as an expression of their public opposition to men's violence against women. WRC has since spread to more than 60 countries, using education, capacity-building, and media campaigns to reach and inspire men and boys to change.⁴⁶
- The Men's Action to Stop Violence Against Women (MASVAW) is a network of men and organizations working on gender issues, including gender-based violence, primarily in the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. Through workshops and advocacy campaigns, MASVAW raises awareness and recruits new activists who engage other men to bring about change. Since its founding in 2001, MASVAW has grown to include 500 individuals and nearly 200 organizations from 20 districts of Uttar Pradesh.⁴⁷
- Dozens of examples exist of other such activism; a few examples of men's organized and on-going activism against gender-based violence and inequities include: ABAAD in Lebanon, which organizes national media campaigns to engage men in questioning gender norms and ending violence against women; Abatangamuco in rural Burundi, where men who have recognized the harmful effects of violence against women travel to other nearby villages to share their experiences of change from violence to nonviolence (Wallacher 2012); Asociacion de Hombres contra la Violencia contra la Mujer (The Association of Men Against Violence) in Nicaragua, which mobilizes men, particularly young men, to challenge the culture of machismo; and Sonke Gender Justice's One Man Can Campaign in South Africa and Sudan, which provides men and boys with materials, such as action sheets and video clips, to help them advocate against domestic and sexual violence and respond to HIV/AIDS.⁴⁸

Unfortunately, despite the many advances in understanding and the development of initiatives related to engaging men and boys in gender equality, progress has been uneven.

While there have been some notable changes in gender roles and relations in certain geographic regions and in certain domains of intimate and social life, changes have been slower in other geographic regions and domains of men's and women's lives. Moreover, efforts to engage men in gender equality have generally been in the form of short-term projects, often only reaching relatively small numbers of men at a time, and often in contexts where social norms, policies, and other structural factors continue to limit the potential for broader transformations.

FRAMING MEN'S ROLES IN SUPPORTING GENDER EQUALITY: FROM GATEKEEPERS TO STAKEHOLDERS

Although there is generally widespread agreement that men have a role to play in achieving gender equality, there are divergent understandings in terms of the nature and extent of this role. How should we understand men's responsibilities and potential contributions to the gender equality agenda? What language most appropriately reflects and effectively encourages men to develop respectful, trusting, and egalitarian relations with others?

One way of framing men's role in gender equality is as gatekeepers. This framework views male engagement as a practical necessity to changing the conditions of women's lives, given that household relations, communities, and social structures are still largely dominated by men.⁴⁹ As the ICPD Programme of Action noted: "Men play a key role in bringing about gender equality since, in most societies, men exercise preponderant power in nearly every

sphere of life, ranging from personal decisions regarding the size of families to the policy and programme decisions taken at all levels of government."⁵⁰ *One of the problems with this framework, however, is that it tends to reinforce rather than challenge the patriarchal model.* While men are primary decision-makers in many aspects of women's lives and thus potential resisters to change, they are also companions, fathers, colleagues—individuals with concerns about the well-being of the women and girls in their lives. When we view men only as gatekeepers, we perpetuate the idea that they are somehow removed from the gender equality equation, that gender equality is something in which only women have a stake.⁵¹ In limiting ourselves to the gatekeeper frame, we also risk reinforcing the perception that men are a uniformly and unfailingly powerful group when in fact certain men hold greater decision-making power than others.⁵²

Another, more common, way of framing men's role is as **allies or partners**. Some believe that this framing is more compelling because it presents gender equality as an egalitarian endeavor—one in which men too have a responsibility and active role to play. However, as with the gatekeeper framework, *this language does not fully capture men's role or stake in gender equality—it does not capture men's obligation to create a just and fair world nor the ways in which men's lives also improve with greater gender equality, including with equal rights and empowerment for women.* The language of allies or partners can also perpetuate the idea that gender equality and associated issues, such as violence prevention and sexual and reproductive health and rights, are ultimately women's issues, which men may support or engage in for the benefit of women and girls, but not necessarily for their own benefit or that of society more broadly.⁵³

Increasingly, advocates are describing **men as stakeholders and co-beneficiaries** in advancing gender-equality.⁶¹ In addition to being a more accurate reflection of the range and depth of gains from gender equality, treating men as stakeholders returns us to the inherent relational nature of gender. There is a substantial and ever-growing body of evidence that women's increased education, employment, and access to health services is good not

only for them, but also for their children, their families, and society as a whole—including men. In addition to broader ethical and social gains, men as individuals benefit from greater equality through healthier relationships with the women and girls in their lives and a greater range of options in terms of their own experiences and behaviors—at all levels, from the intimate to the socio-economic (see Box 6).

BOX 6

BENEFITS OF GENDER EQUALITY FOR MEN

The International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES), a comprehensive household survey coordinated by Promundo and the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) and carried out with more than 20,000 men in nine countries, found that men who support gender equality or have more equitable attitudes are more likely to report life satisfaction.⁵⁴ Indeed, there is an ever-growing body of evidence that affirms that gender equality is not a zero sum game:

- Women's increased access to and participation in the labor market results in higher household incomes and less pressure on men to be sole or primary breadwinners;
- Men who take on greater caregiving roles experience deeper connections with children and partners⁵⁵ and are more likely to have better physical and mental health.⁵⁶ Men's increased participation in children's lives also leads to more positive outcomes for children;⁵⁷
- Refraining from violence allows men to enjoy more trusting and respectful relations with women, children, and other men;
- Men with greater gender equitable beliefs and who more openly communicate with their partners report greater sexual satisfaction;⁵⁸ and
- Men's increased participation in household chores is associated with happier relationships, for the men as well as for their partners.⁵⁹

While bringing benefits to the forefront can be an effective motivational strategy, we do not want to diminish men's ethical responsibility to change the system that gives them an unjust share of power.⁶⁰ Efforts to engage men and boys in gender equality must also seek to evoke men's responsibility and sense of justice as members of a common citizenry and as human beings. Because gender equality benefits all humanity, it should be the aspiration of all humanity—men and women. ***It is possible to highlight the benefits to men themselves of living gender equality and at the same time to appeal to the fact that gender equality is the right thing to do and support.***

Some believe that one of the reasons we have not progressed further is that many men do not perceive the advantages of improved gender equality.⁶¹ Many men may believe that, on the whole, existing gender dynamics serve them well. Or they have reservations about what they might have to sacrifice in order to support gender equality. **The IMAGES study found, for example, that although large numbers of men express supportive attitudes toward gender equality in the abstract, there are still gaps between attitudes and behaviors, and resistance toward some aspects of gender equality when men perceive they might have to give something up (in the case of quotas for women in the workplace, for example).**⁶²

Given that men collectively benefit from the patriarchal dividend, it follows that gender equality will necessarily involve men losing some of their unfair privileges.⁶³ At the household level, these privileges may include sole decision-making authority over the use of resources or the material benefit to themselves of having girls and women perform all of the care giving and domestic work.⁶⁴ In the context of intimate relationships, these privileges may include a sense of sexual entitlement or not having to take equal responsibility for contraceptive use. At broader levels, these privileges may mean only having to compete with half the population for certain jobs and positions of influence.

These privileges, however, are generally only one part of the picture. Very often, the same rigid gender norms that may bestow on men certain advantages also create risk and vulnerabilities.⁶⁵ For example cultural and social expectations that uphold men as 'tough' and 'in control' may also lead men to engage in risk-taking behaviors or to

stifle their feelings, which have negative implications for their psychological and physical well-being. ***Research that listens to the lives of women and men increasingly confirms a complex dynamic in which privilege is given up, slowly and unevenly, as men perceive the benefits of gender equality and women's empowerment.***⁶⁶ This dynamic nature of change toward gender equality, which emerges when the lived experiences of men and women are heard, is too often lost in our discussions of policy goals.

Of course, engaging men and boys in gender equality is not simply about constructing compelling arguments about the benefits of gender equality.⁶⁷ Change is not an easy task and, given that gender equality is a globally recognized human right, neither is it an optional task. At an individual level, it can be difficult for men (as well as women) to transform beliefs and practices that have been learned and internalized from childhood.⁶⁸ For many men (as with many women), gender is a central organizing principle of their sense of identity—challenging men's notions of masculinity may in some ways be akin to challenging their notions of self. Moreover, men's and boys' motivation and capacity to change are often also dependent on their broader contexts and the extent to which peer networks, media messaging, public policies, opinion leaders and other influences continue to perpetuate certain messages about gender norms.

For many men, their motivation and capacity to change are deeply intertwined with their own socio-economic realities. Men who do not feel like they benefit from the patriarchal dividend may resent programs that they perceive as allocating benefits and entitlements only to women and girls.⁶⁹

As Lynne Segal has described: "Interpersonal struggles to change men, attempts by men to refashion their conceptions of what it is to be a man, always encounter and frequently collide with other power relations.... State policy, and expansions and contractions of welfare, as well as patterns of paid employment for men and for women, affect the possibilities of change in men. As some socialist feminists have always known, the difficulty of changing men is, in part, the difficulty of changing political and economic structures."⁷⁰ Similarly, Silberschmidt, in discussing men in the context of poverty, has emphasized that even where greater equality in roles may lead to personal benefits, it may not be a "primary interest among men, whereas socio-economic change and access to income-generating activities is."⁷¹

PATHWAYS TO CHANGE FOR MEN

While discussing how men and boys should embrace gender equality is important, we also have to take into account how men and boys actually do come to embrace it. Just as the benefits of greater gender equality are many and diverse, so are the paths by which men and boys come to support and live out gender equality. For many men, their support for gender equality derives from a sense of rightness, goodness, and common humanity (often originating in political, ethical, or religious principles) that leads them to help end injustices against others.⁷² **For other men, their support for gender equality might be grounded more in self-interest or concern for their own personal well-being and relationships. Or their support may be the result of macro-level changes, such as girls' and women's increased participation in education and the labor force, which leave them with little option but to alter their ways of relating and partnering.** Pathways

for men's engagement are not mutually exclusive. The "Men Who Care" study, part of IMAGES, found, for example, that men who did a greater share of unpaid care work did not, for the most part, do so for "rights-based" reasons; rather life circumstances required them to do more care work, they accepted this change, and later came to embrace more equitable attitudes.⁷³

For many men, their interest in gender equality is a relational one, based on concern about the consequences of gender inequality for the women and girls in their lives—their wives, partners, mothers, daughters, colleagues, and friends.⁷⁴ To be sure, engaging men to challenge gender inequalities on the basis of the harm it does to the women and girls in their lives is a common rhetorical strategy, as well as a compelling one. However, it is important to emphasize that men's investment in gender equality should be as human beings; they should be affected by the harm to their loved ones because of their care for the women and girls affected. It should not be because they perceive harms against these women or girls as an expression of their inability to protect them, or as an attack on their sense of power and privilege.

Many men may be compelled to support gender equality because they share interests and identities with communities of which women are also a part—such as low-wage workers, the LGBTI community, and minority racial or ethnic groups. These shared experiences may give men a deeper sense of solidarity with women and girls and their well-being. Similarly, men's own experiences of marginalization in one domain may fuel their commitment to other social justice issues.⁷⁵

In sum, there are multiple and sometimes conflicting pathways to men's engagement in gender equality, some based on self-interest, some partly based in attitudes of protection

(and thus potentially patriarchal) and some based on buying into a sense of gender justice and universal human rights. Our policies will be better informed by an understanding of these multiple pathways to gender equality on the part

BOX 7

GENDER EQUALITY, PROSPERITY, AND STABILITY

There is now a robust body of evidence confirming that gender equality is intricately linked to issues of social and economic security. Research has found that when a society treats its women and girls well, it has greater stability and prosperity.⁷⁶ For example, societies with lower investments in female education have lower national incomes than those with greater investments in female education. In addition, where rule of law allows impunity where crimes against women are concerned, there is greater tolerance for violence in general, and relatedly, greater instability. In fact, the best predictor of a state's peacefulness—more than levels of wealth, levels of democracy, or ethno-religious identity—is women's physical security against violence. Democracies with higher levels of violence against women, for example, are as insecure and unstable as non-democracies. Thus, societies broadly, including women and men, girls and boys, benefit from the improved treatment and position of women and girls in society.

PART 2

**THE STATE OF
MEN AND
GENDER EQUALITY:
CHALLENGES
AND ADVANCES**

While gender inequality is still pervasive around the world, there is evidence of substantial and significant, positive changes in men's attitudes toward gender equality. The International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES), a comprehensive household survey carried out with more than 20,000 men in nine countries, found that men in all of the countries, with the exception of India, are generally supportive of gender equality, with 87 percent to 90 percent affirming that "men do not lose out when women's rights are promoted." The study also found that younger generations of men are more supportive of gender equality and more likely to engage in household tasks than older generations.⁷⁷ Similarly, an analysis of World Values Survey data from 1994 to 2008 found notable shifts toward more equitable gender attitudes regarding women's political and labor-market participation.⁷⁸

Unfortunately, there is still tremendous variation, as well as resistance and tension, when it comes to men's understandings of gender equality.

As previously noted, change has been extremely uneven, whether by region, social class, or other factors. While the IMAGES study found that men generally do not perceive gender equality as a zero sum game, it also found that many men feel that it had already come far enough or had already been achieved.⁷⁹ A UN-led, multi-country study with men in Asia and the Pacific, using some of the same items from IMAGES, also found that although between 84 and 99 percent of respondents, both men and women, believed in the abstract idea of equality—supporting the statement that "people should be treated the same whether they are male or female"—their views were considerably less equitable when asked about specific norms related to family and household practices and women's position.⁸⁰

Other studies have found that some men, particularly in the poorest parts of the world, view gender equality as an externally imposed agenda that is hostile to men.⁸¹ While there is not a clear association between poverty and the holding of oppositional views about gender equality, research does suggest that men who feel economically or socially excluded are less likely to support equality for women.

Understanding men's attitudes, how they have changed, how they have stayed static, and areas of resistance, is essential to moving the work with men and boys forward. In this section we explore prevalent attitudes, practices, and continuing challenges related to engaging men and boys in several areas critical to advancing gender equality: gender-based violence, education, domestic work and care giving, employment and income, and sexual and reproductive health and rights. We also present examples of advances in the effort to transform attitudes, from local, project-based efforts to large-scale, structural initiatives that have led to measurable changes in men's attitudes, behaviors, and relations with others.

While these are the areas where research and programming around men and boys have been primarily focused, they are not the only areas where work is needed. As laid out in the Beijing Platform for Action, gender equality and women's empowerment are cross-cutting issues which require concerted action across many different areas: from addressing the increasing burden of poverty on women and girls and inadequacies in and lack of access to health care and related services, to challenging the stereotyping of women in media and reducing inequalities in the management of natural resources and the safeguarding of the environment (para. 44). The areas discussed in this section represent only a portion of what needs to be a comprehensive approach toward engaging men and boys in gender equality.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Developing a holistic and multidisciplinary approach to the challenging task of promoting families, communities and States that are free of violence against women is necessary and achievable. Equality, partnership between women and men and respect for human dignity must permeate all stages of the socialization process.

Beijing Platform for Action, Chapter IV.D., paragraph 119

One of the most explicit manifestations of gender inequality is men's use of violence against women and girls. Despite increased attention to the issue, statistics are still staggering. Globally, the WHO reports that 35 percent of women have experienced either intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime.⁸² A UN study with 10,000 men across six countries in Asia and the Pacific found that, overall, nearly half reported using physical and/or sexual violence against a female partner, ranging from 26 percent to 80 percent across the sites.⁸³ Nearly a quarter of men interviewed reported perpetrating rape against a woman or girl, ranging from 10 percent to 62 percent across the sites.⁸⁴ A study with 42,000 women across the European Union also found extensive levels of abuse against women, much of it systematically under-reported to the authorities.⁸⁵ One in five women had experienced physical and/or sexual violence from either a current or previous partner, and just over one in ten women had experienced some form of sexual violence by an adult before they were 15 years old.⁸⁶ Similarly, the IMAGES study cited earlier, which included nearly 12 global South countries, found that between 20 and 54 percent of men reported ever having used

physical violence against a female partner. Statistics for emotional and psychological interpersonal violence are equally as shocking.⁸⁷

While intimate partner violence is often the most commonly discussed form of violence against women, it is only one of many forms of violence against women and girls. Throughout the world, women and girls experience widespread violence in the form of forced marriage, honor killing, female genital mutilation, trafficking, and sexual harassment. Newer forms of violence have emerged with the technological age, including online bullying, harassment, and stalking.

Various studies have affirmed links between rigid attitudes about gender roles, power inequalities, and men's use of violence against women.⁸⁸ In a wide variety of settings, the most consistent predictor of attitudes supporting the use of violence against women is beliefs about appropriate roles for men and women.⁸⁹ These beliefs, in turn, are linked to men's actual use of violence. In the UN's multi-country study in Asia and the Pacific, for example, the most common motivation that men reported for rape perpetration was related to sexual

entitlement, or men's belief that they have the right to sex, regardless of consent. In most contexts, this motivation was reported by 70 to 80 percent of men who had raped.⁹⁰

As discussed earlier, some studies have found links between men's struggles to fulfill traditional gender roles and their use of violence against girls and women.

Where men may face decreased earning power and greater difficulty fulfilling the role of provider, they may resort to violence to retain or regain control or authority in their relationships and households.⁹¹ These findings do not excuse men in their use of violence against women; they serve to explain what factors drive such violence.

As with other rigid gender ideologies, there are strong patterns of inter-generational transmission of attitudes and behaviors related to violence against women. Various studies have found that men who experienced violence in their childhood home are more likely to perpetrate violence as adults.⁹² In a multivariate analysis of the IMAGES data, the single strongest factor, across countries, of men's use of violence against intimate partners was having witnessed violence during childhood against their mother.⁹³ Among other things, what this data suggests is that men's lives are also harmed by gender-based violence. Beyond the internalization and repetition of inequitable norms, witnessing violence against women when growing up—which between 20 and 40 percent of men do, according to IMAGES—is a source of harm in multiple ways. This finding gives us yet another insight on how to find men's stake in ending violence against women and achieving gender equality.

Another important aspect of men's attitudes toward violence against women concerns their willingness to intervene in situations of violence. The majority of men in most settings do not use violence against women, and these men have an important

role to play in challenging men who use violence. Unfortunately, too many might believe that men's violence is not an issue that concerns them or not one in which they should get involved. Research on this has generally been limited. A national survey in Australia found that most men affirm that they would intervene in some way in a domestic violence situation, although they are less likely (although still very likely) to do so if the victim is a woman they do not know being assaulted in public.⁹⁴ IMAGES also found a high willingness of men to intervene in cases of witnessing violence by men against women.⁹⁵ Even though men are not, apparently, intervening in large numbers, these research findings suggest a potential for moving toward a social norm that men *should* intervene. ***There is a need for research on the factors that encourage men to move from positive attitudes about bystander action to actual intervention in situations of violence.***

In addition to rigid gender norms, power inequities, and men's own childhood experiences of male violence, there are also context-specific drivers of violence, including socio-cultural norms and local legal systems.⁹⁶ In many societies, girls and women are often blamed for precipitating their own sexual victimization, be it through "provocative" dress or behavior. In addition to degrading girls and women and their experiences of victimization, these victim-blaming responses reinforce the harmful notion that the male sex drive is uncontrollable and, in effect, excuse men's sexual violence as natural and acceptable.⁹⁷ Similarly, the lack of effective laws prohibiting violence against girls and women, or the failure to implement such laws where they exist, create cultures of impunity where violence is concerned, which in turn contribute to acceptance of violence against girls and women as a norm. Cultures of impunity can be present at national or local levels, as well as within institutions, such as the military, universities, religious institutions,

and sporting teams. Studies have also affirmed a link between media, particularly media that depicts women as sex objects and victims, and acceptance of violence against women.⁹⁸

There are, to be sure, some positive sides to the story—there is some indication that attitudes toward violence against women have been changing. A recent longitudinal analysis of Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) data from 15 low- and middle-income countries found significant increases, in most of the countries, in the percentage of men who rejected justifications of violence against women.⁹⁹ IMAGES found that older age was a predictor of use of violence against women, suggesting a potential, positive generational shift in attitudes that some qualitative data has also affirmed.¹⁰⁰ Educational attainment for men and women has been found to be associated with low incidence of violence against women in some settings; given that education levels are increasing globally, this suggests the potential for a trend toward reduced GBV in some parts of the world.

SPOTLIGHT ON PRACTICE AND POLICIES:

There are an increasing number of evaluations that have demonstrated the effectiveness of **group education methodologies** that engage men and boys in challenging gender;

- **Stepping Stones**, originally developed in Uganda and, after adaptation, implemented in diverse settings in Africa, reaches men through community-based work shops that promote critical reflections about gender and equitable relationships. A rigorous evaluation in South Africa found significant reductions in physical and sexual violence against intimate partners at a 24-month follow up.¹⁰¹

- **School-based dating-violence prevention programs in North America that explicitly address gender stereotypes have also led to reductions in reported violence.**¹⁰² A four-year follow-up evaluation of one such mixed-sex program involving early teens—Safe Dates—was found to lead to significant reductions in sexual and physical dating violence, thereby reinforcing the importance of starting prevention work early.¹⁰³

Bystander interventions, which engage men to challenge other men's use of violence, are increasingly used.¹⁰⁴

- **Coaching Boys into Men**, originally developed in the USA and adapted for India (where it is called Parivartan), engages coaches as positive role models and trains them to deliver messages to their male athletes about the importance of respecting and understanding women. Evaluations in both settings have found significant impacts on bystander intentions, bystander behaviors, and attitudes toward gender roles.¹⁰⁵

- **Bell Bajao!** (Hindi for Ring the Bell) is a multi-media campaign that calls on men and boys across India to take a stand against domestic violence by performing a simple bystander intervention—ringing the doorbell when they overhear domestic violence, thus interrupting it. The campaign's Public Service Announcements on television, radio, and in print, together with an online campaign and travelling video vans, have reached over 130 million people. In addition, more than 75,000 rights advocates were trained to become agents of change—their combined efforts have resulted in significantly greater

recognition of the various forms of domestic violence and awareness of India's national law against it.¹⁰⁶

In addition to the promising work around interpersonal violence, there are notable examples of efforts to engage men and boys in the fight against other forms of violence against women, most notably in eliminating the practice of female genital mutilation/cutting. ***The engagement of religious and traditional leaders (often men) has been an important part of successful efforts to end female genital mutilation throughout Africa.*** Through such community-based efforts, the Senegalese organization Tostan has helped to end the practice of female cutting in 2,600 villages.¹⁰⁷ The UNFPA and UNICEF Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting, which is being implemented in 17 countries in Africa, has incorporated the mobilization of key male religious leaders into its specific strategies.¹⁰⁸

EDUCATION

Creation of an educational and social environment in which women and men, girls and boys, are treated equally and encouraged to achieve their full potential, respecting their freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief, and where educational resources promote non-stereotyped images of women and men, would be effective in the elimination of the causes of discrimination against women and inequalities between women and men.

Beijing Platform for Action, Chapter IV.B. 72

Education is a major driver in changing gender norms and advancing gender equality. There have been significant achievements in this area in the last few decades. Overall, disparities between men's and women's total years of education are not only shrinking, but we are moving toward global convergence, with a large number of countries at or close to parity.¹⁰⁹ However, significant disparities in boys' and girls' access to primary education, as well as in their access to secondary and tertiary education, persist across regions.¹¹⁰

Men and boys, as fathers, brothers, classmates, and political and cultural leaders, have an important role to play in ensuring and supporting girls' access to education, which is a vital component of girls' empowerment. Ensuring boys' own access to education is also an important aspect of engaging men and boys in gender equality: research has found that men with higher levels of education (secondary education and above) are more likely to hold more gender equitable attitudes and to be involved in care work activities.¹¹¹

Furthermore, as girls and boys spend more of their time in schools, the gender regimes or norms within schools become increasingly important.¹¹² The United Nations Secretary-General's Report on Violence against Children affirms that "children spend more time in the care of adults in places of learning than they do anywhere else outside of their homes".¹¹³ Unfortunately, schools can too often be spaces where boys are exposed to rigid, violent, and hyper masculine norms—and the bullying, homophobic or otherwise, that come from those—and girls to sexual harassment and other forms of violence and discrimination.¹¹⁴ The Global School-Based Student Health Survey found that in 12 of the 19 low- and middle-income countries surveyed, boys were significantly more likely to report being bullied.¹¹⁵ Girls were significantly more likely to experience sexual harassment.

SPOTLIGHT ON PRACTICE AND POLICIES:

- ◉ Originally developed in community settings in Latin America, ***Promundo's Program H***, which promotes critical reflections about gender norms through workshops and youth-led campaigns, has been integrated into school settings in Brazil, India, and the Western Balkans, among other sites. Through partnerships with ministries of education and the development of an online training portal for educators, scaled-up efforts have been able to reach thousands of students, boys and girls, and led to positive changes in gender-related attitudes, including reduced tolerance for violence against girls and women. The scaled-up experiences have also affirmed the potential for effectively reaching large numbers of boys and young men, as well as girls and young women, and positively changing institutional culture and practices related to gender equality.¹¹⁶
- ◉ There are an increasing number of ***school-based approaches aimed at reducing sexual harassment*** and violence by boys or men against girls. Of the 65 studies identified in a recent systematic review of interventions for preventing boys' and young men's use of sexual violence, the vast majority (90 percent), took place in school settings; many of them have been demonstrated to be effective in changing attitudes.¹¹⁷ One program in particular—***Safe Dates*** (also described above)—has had a significant impact on behavior: four years after participation in the program, adolescents reported perpetrating significantly less sexual and physical dating violence than those in a control group.¹¹⁸
- ◉ Drawing from experiences in diverse settings, UNFPA, UNESCO and other UN agencies have created ***guidelines and standards for incorporating gender equality into sexuality education, life skills education***, and HIV prevention in schools.¹¹⁹

DOMESTIC WORK AND CAREGIVING

Inequality in the public arena can often start with discriminatory attitudes and practices and unequal power relations between women and men within the family... The unequal division of labour and responsibilities within households based on unequal power relations... limits women's potential to find the time and develop the skills required for participation in decision-making in wider public forums.

Beijing Platform for Action, Chapter IV.G., paragraph 185

Compared with other aspects of social life, change in the domestic division of labor has been slow, and traditional patterns remain prevalent, even as changes have occurred in less than a generation in a few parts of the world. ¹²⁰ In the IMAGES study, approximately 68 percent of men said that housecleaning is "usually" or "always" carried out by their female partner, with as many as 93 percent of men in India reporting this. Only a small minority said that they took on a larger share of housecleaning than their partner. Moreover, 93 percent reported that they are satisfied with the current—and highly unequal—division of household duties in their homes. ¹²¹

Throughout the world, men's involvement in caregiving in the home also continues to lag behind advances that women have made in paid work outside the home. ¹²² Research in lower-, middle- and high-income countries has found that, despite the significant increase of women in the paid workforce, the mean time spent on unpaid work by women is between two and ten times more than the time spent on the same work by men. ¹²³ Moreover, women are more often the primary caregivers not only for children, but also for elderly relatives. ¹²⁴

The World Bank has identified the caregiving divide as one of the primary drivers in the gender pay and employment gap. ¹²⁵ Norms related to women's caregiving role in the home not only affects girls' and women's access to education and the formal labor market, but also the types of jobs they migrate into. Throughout the world, women continue to be disproportionately employed in historically poorly-paid caregiving work, such as nursing. ¹²⁶

While there are enduring patterns of inequality in care work, ***there is evidence in some settings that the time men devote to domestic activities and care work may be increasing.*** ¹²⁷ Moreover, younger men, men with more gender equitable attitudes, men in urban settings, men with higher levels of education, and unemployed men are more likely to be involved in care work activities, ¹²⁸ as are men whose partners earn income or work outside the home.

Men's active engagement with caregiving has a positive effect on the gender socialization of children. There is evidence that positive male parental involvement increases the likelihood that sons will grow up to be more gender-equitable and involved fathers themselves, and that

daughters will have more flexible views about gender equality and a greater sense of equality within relationships.¹²⁹ Engaging men to be more active in caring roles with their children can also be a key strategy in ending men's violence against women: research has found that men who are engaged in caring roles with their children are less likely to commit violence against their partners.¹³⁰ Given the link between witnessing one's father's use of violence and one's own use of violence, engaging fathers in modeling nonviolent behaviors is crucial to ending the cycle of violence.

In spite of the uneven advances and continuing inequality in terms of unpaid care work, this may be the area with the best chance for helping men see the benefits of equality and change. A vast body of literature confirms that men who report closer relationships to their children, and provide more of the care, are healthier and happier.¹³¹ Engaging men in critical reflections regarding their own caregiving attitudes and behaviors is important to the promotion of men's more equitable participation in care work. However, work with individual men must also be accompanied by efforts to address systematic barriers to more equitable divisions of caregiving. Most government and workplace policies are still rooted in traditional assumptions that women are the sole or primary caregivers in a family, and provide fathers with no or minimal leave. ***Most countries continue to offer only a few days or a week of paternity leave, in effect reinforcing the norm that men are, at most, helpers in child care.***¹³² These policies leave women and families with limited choices when it comes to balancing care and paid work, which in turn reinforces gender disparities in the workforce and in the home. While there are a handful of program interventions that have been shown to positively influence men's and boys' attitudes related to caregiving and domestic work,¹³³ these interventions alone will not lead to broader change without more progressive parental leave and childcare policies.

SPOTLIGHT ON PRACTICE AND POLICIES:

- Partners in ***MenCare, a global fatherhood campaign***, and many others organizations are carrying out efforts to promote men's greater participation in caregiving. These include using the health sector as a space to recruit men via prenatal visits or community outreach. At the project level, such approaches show promise in terms of providing men with a greater sense of competence that they can carry out caregiving, changing community norms around men and caregiving, and including key themes such as maternal and child health and non-violent raising of children. Publicly-supported fatherhood preparation courses and information campaigns focusing on men's roles in the lives of children can offer strategic opportunities to address fathers' reported feelings of being unprepared or ill-informed about caring for children, and help men perceive benefits to themselves from greater participation in family life.¹³⁴ (For more information, see <http://www.men-care.org/>).
- The Nordic experience with **parental leave policies** is often touted as one of the most extensive and successful efforts to shift gender norms and increase men's engagement in parenting. Years of reform and research have confirmed that well-paid, nontransferable leave for men—the "use-it-or-lose-it" model—is more effective than optional leave because it makes taking leave economically feasible for men who might be the primary breadwinners.¹³⁵ Reserving nontransferable parental leave for fathers also helps to dispel the stigma often associated with men taking time off to care for children. The impact on men's engagement has been impressive: in Iceland, for example, about 90 percent of Icelandic fathers now take parental leave.¹³⁶

EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME

To realize full equality between women and men in their contribution to the economy, active efforts are required for equal recognition and appreciation of the influence that the work, experience, knowledge and values of both women and men have in society.

Beijing Platform for Action, Chapter IV.F., paragraph 163

Women's access to employment is key to the promotion of gender equality. Income inequality correlates with inequalities in other domains of women's and men's social and personal lives, such as women's capacity to exercise their preferences regarding the division of domestic work, the allocation of household income, and their ability to leave violent, oppressive, or undesired relationships.¹³⁷

*Globally, there have been significant increases in the rate of women's employment in the last several decades, albeit uneven across countries and regions.*¹³⁸ However, despite the progress that has been achieved, women still face significant wage gaps and occupational segregation.¹³⁹ Moreover, in some parts of the world, changes in women's incomes have been driven by greater poverty rather than greater prosperity where, for example, women's incomes are rising relative to men's because men's employment in certain traditional sectors has fallen. Given that employment is a particularly salient domain for the fulfillment of norms of masculinity, these "equalizing down" gains deserve careful consideration. Research has found, for example, that in recessions, male job loss

triggers increased incidence of domestic violence.¹⁴⁰ However, while Hossain has identified links between men's economic difficulties and domestic strife, she has also noted an "emancipatory potential, most plainly for women, but also for poor men who have less invested in old school patriarchy than before (and indeed, than richer men)." ¹⁴¹

As discussed above, **women and girls still perform the large majority of unpaid domestic and care work, which limits their access to and equal treatment in labor markets.**¹⁴² Challenging gender stereotypes related to domestic work and caregiving and enacting policies that encourage and support men's involvement are thus key to advancing women's economic empowerment. Moreover, in addition to more equally sharing domestic responsibilities, men have an important role to play in promoting equality in the workplace, from actively supporting women's advancement, to ensuring safe and respectful workspaces through both their own behavior and supportive policies.

SPOTLIGHT ON PRACTICE AND POLICIES:

- Given that economic empowerment and microcredit programs reach between 100 and 125 million individuals worldwide, more than 90 percent of them women, such programs offer a tremendous entry point for engaging men. CARE, International Rescue Committee, Promundo and many other organizations are increasingly testing ways of **engaging men as partners in women-focused economic empowerment initiatives**. Initial assessment of such approaches has found generally positive effects when men (generally husbands) are included in such initiatives, including more equitable household decision-making, increased couple communication, and higher income gains for the family.¹⁴³
- With the aim of increasing the representation of women in top positions in the corporate sector, Norway passed a **gender quota** in 2003, which mandated 40 percent representation of each gender on the board of public limited liability companies. The quota worked: from 2004 to 2008, the number of female board members in Norway increased from 16 percent to the target 40 percent. Other European countries, including Spain, France, and Iceland, have followed suit by passing similar laws.¹⁴⁴

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS



Equal relationships between women and men in matters of sexual relations and reproduction, including full respect for the integrity of the person, require mutual respect, consent and shared responsibility for sexual behaviour and its consequences... Shared responsibility between women and men in matters related to sexual and reproductive behaviour is also essential to improving women's health.

Beijing Platform for Action, Chapter IV.C., paragraphs 96 and 97



Throughout the world, sexual and reproductive health and rights are still largely associated only with women. Because of social norms against men's self-help, many men neglect their own sexual and reproductive health needs, in addition to those of their partners, thereby leaving women and girls to bear much of the burden of care on their own. Moreover, rigid gender norms related to male dominance and sexual entitlement often leave women vulnerable to unwanted sexual encounters, pregnancy, and infections.¹⁴⁵ In addition to rigid gender norms, there are structural barriers to men's engagement in sexual and reproductive health, including health services that are ill-prepared to address male-specific health issues or that see men as only marginal players in sexual and reproductive health issues.¹⁴⁶

Men taking more personal responsibility for their sexual and reproductive health and being supportive of women's sexual and reproductive health choices is an important component of gender equality. **Unfortunately, while sexual and reproductive health, contraception, and related matters are still widely considered to be a woman's concern,**

women's actual access to and use of services is still, in many ways, shaped by men's decision-making.¹⁴⁷ At the individual and household levels, this is particularly true where men control financial resources and women's mobility.¹⁴⁸ At the societal level, in many settings, small but powerful groups of male politicians, cultural, and religious leaders with conservative agendas control girls' and women's access to sexual and reproductive health services more broadly.

Gender norms and inequalities have also been one of the key drivers of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, shaping attitudes and behaviors related to prevention, treatment, care and support. Norms that equate masculinity with sexual risk-taking and control over women may lead men to forego condoms, to have more partners, and to engage in more transactional sex. Similarly, norms surrounding masculinity may discourage men's use of HIV testing and necessary related services. Studies have found, for example, that, compared to women, men with HIV start ART with more advanced HIV disease, are more likely to interrupt treatment, and are more likely to be

lost to follow-up—all of which result in increased vulnerability and harm, both to men and to their partners and families. In addition, with the massive roll-out of HIV testing and treatment, studies have consistently shown that men seek HIV testing at a lower rate than women do in most settings, and that men are less likely to seek, use, and adhere to treatment, leading to ongoing health risks for themselves, their partners, and their children.

Patterns of contraception use can provide a particularly interesting lens for considering men's engagement in sexual and reproductive health. Worldwide, the responsibility for contraceptive use still falls disproportionately on women. In developed regions, male contraception methods account for 27 percent of use compared to 73 percent for female methods.¹⁴⁹ Comparatively, in developing regions, male contraceptive methods account for 7 percent of use compared to 93 percent for female methods.¹⁵⁰ Similarly, as of 2011, while 18.9 percent of females worldwide were sterilized, only 2.4 percent of men were reported to have undergone a vasectomy.¹⁵¹ Various factors underlie these disparities in the use of female and male methods. In addition to availability, accessibility, and information regarding methods, cultural constructions of masculinity that emphasize fertility and male sexual adventurousness significantly shape men's perceptions about and use of contraception methods, both female and male.¹⁵²

Although there are still significant disparities between women and men across various sexual and reproductive health issues and indicators, there is also evidence of progress. Studies from around the world have found that men's awareness of contraceptive methods has increased while their preference for fertility has declined.¹⁵³ Studies have also found that men desire access to

better contraceptives, including male hormone-based methods. As in other spheres, young men and those with higher levels of education are more supportive of greater equality in roles and responsibilities.¹⁵⁴

SPOTLIGHT ON PRACTICE AND POLICIES:

- A 2007 WHO review of interventions engaging men and boys in sexual and reproductive health, among other health areas, identified various reasonably well-designed programs that had led to changes in behavior and attitudes, including increased contraceptive use (e.g., Together for a Happy Family, Jordan); increased communication with a spouse or partner about child health, contraception and reproductive decision-making (e.g., Soul City, South Africa and Husbands School, Niger); increased use of sexual and reproductive health services by men (e.g., initiatives in health and family welfare centers in Bangladesh); and increased condom use (e.g., Sexto Sentido, Nicaragua).¹⁵⁵
- **In Latin America, there have been compelling efforts to engage men in prenatal care and child birth.** Data from Chile, for example, indicates a dramatic increase in the presence of fathers in the delivery room, owing in part to demand by women and men, as well as public-health reform efforts such as those advocating breastfeeding and changes designed to humanize childbirth. In September 2009, a law institutionalized the Childhood Social Protection System ("Chile Grows with You," or *Chile Crece Contigo*), which supports the holistic development of children and promotes increased participation of fathers in childcare, pregnancy and birth.¹⁵⁶

PART 3

THE WAY FORWARD

While there have been tremendous gains in the 20 years since Beijing, there is still much to accomplish. ***One of the most critical pieces for accelerating the pace of change is meaningfully engaging men and boys and thereby changing the power dynamics that drive masculinities.*** There has been a tremendous surge in efforts with men and boys since Beijing. As a result, we now have more knowledge and greater capacities to move the work to another level, increasing the scale, sustainability, and impact of our efforts. However, there is still a need to continue to build consensus and solidarity for a transformative approach to gender equality. There are two particularly salient areas of tension: the alignment of the work with men and boys with the women's movement's ongoing leadership and efforts toward gender equality; and the growing backlash of organized groups of men who actively question and, in some cases, attempt to undermine the gender equality agenda. Addressing these points of tension is an essential step toward scaling up transformative work with men and boys.

ENGAGING WITH WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS

While there is increasingly widespread agreement that working with men and boys is a necessary part of achieving gender equality, there are also some concerns regarding the strategies and goals of the existing work with men and boys and the operationalization of this work vis-à-vis the ongoing efforts of women's movements.¹⁵⁷ The premise of the work with men and boys that was envisioned at Beijing and Cairo is rooted in gender equality and support for women's rights and empowerment. It is this approach that has framed many efforts around the world. ***However, there are concerns that the work with men and boys has 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.¹⁵⁸

In part, disagreements about the ongoing work with men and boys derives from the sense that some of it has occurred in silos, rather than in collaboration and dialogue with the women's movements and ongoing work with women and girls. There is also resistance from vested institutional interests and some organizations who see gender equality as only and always being about women and girls.¹⁵⁹ And there are concerns, some founded, others unfounded, ***that not all efforts under the banner of working with men and boys share a commitment to gender justice.*** Some are focused only on men's specific gendered needs, which are real and deserve attention but sometimes fail to adequately address the relational dimensions of gender and to challenge the extent to which men continue to be, in the aggregate, politically, economically, and socially privileged by the current gender system, albeit in ways that are shaped by race and ethnicity, class, sexuality, and age.¹⁶⁰

At the broader level of the movement for gender equality, there are also concerns among activists and organizations about the dynamics and sharing of space and resources. Historically, feminist and women's movements have affirmed the need for women to be the agents and leaders in addressing their oppression and transforming gender power relations.¹⁶¹ Although there is growing recognition of the need to engage men and boys in challenging patriarchal systems and culture, there is concern that men's involvement in these movements reproduces patterns of men's power and privilege and threatens women's leadership of the movement.¹⁶² Feminists and activists have questioned,

for example, the extent to which projects "engaging men" (often also led by men) have attracted more media and donor attention for actively supporting what women have been campaigning and working on for many years.¹⁶³ Similarly, there are concerns that as male leaders in the movement for gender equality become the new "experts," there will be an erosion of women's leadership.¹⁶⁴

Concerns that male-engagement approaches are competing with women's groups for scarce funding have further exacerbated apprehensions regarding the extent to which the work with men and boys is truly accountable to the principles and ideas of the women's rights movements.¹⁶⁵ Even where male-led and male-focused initiatives are understood as part of the feminist movement, this does not prevent competition for donor funds amongst men's feminist organizing and women's rights networks themselves.¹⁶⁶ Moreover, there are concerns that male-led organizations may be better positioned to attract financing.¹⁶⁷ ***However, whether new programs or projects that engage men are, in fact, taking away funds from traditional women's empowerment work is nearly impossible to prove.*** Analyses of current funding cycles suggest that work with men still represents a very small percentage of gender equality-related funding.¹⁶⁸ ***Studies on overseas development assistance show that funding for gender equality and for women's health and rights has generally increased over recent years, but they also point out that these resources, more and more, go to large international NGOs and not to local or national organizations involved in the important work of advocacy and accountability.***¹⁶⁹

While many activists and organizations engaging men and boys actively seek to align their work with women's

movements, there is still a need for greater reflection and analysis on the part of feminist men regarding their own gender-based power and how to ensure that shared spaces remain feminist, and that women's leadership and voices remain the backbone of feminist discourse.¹⁷⁰ Efforts to engage men and boys in gender equality should be developed and implemented in ongoing consultation with groups working to promote and protect women's rights. This might include, for instance, ensuring board positions for women's rights organizations or involving women's rights organizations in strategic planning processes.¹⁷¹ Activists and organizations working with men and boys, again, even if working with men and boys exclusively, should ensure that they are advocating for funding and recognition for gender equality work more broadly, not just for work with men and boys specifically.¹⁷²

As one advocate expressed, organizations working with men and boys should be allies with women's rights organizations "in pushing for not cutting smaller pieces of the same pie, but making a bigger pie that also includes masculinity work in the context of violence against women, and primary prevention work with men and boys."¹⁷³

CHALLENGING ORGANIZED AND SYSTEMATIC BACKLASH TO GENDER EQUALITY

In many parts of the world, there is backlash from organized groups of men (and some women) who argue that gender equality and women's empowerment have come too far or short-changed men and boys. These groups are a minority, but they are visible and vocal in some settings and they sometimes actively seek to usurp the dialogue about gender relations and power inequalities.¹⁷⁴

In Australia, Canada, parts of Latin America, some parts of Asia, the United Kingdom, the United States, and India, for example, "men's rights" groups and organizations have emerged, coalescing around the view that women's newly empowered status has marginalized and disempowered men.¹⁷⁵ These groups have been particularly active in the context of "father's rights," but also in organizing against laws and services related to violence against women.¹⁷⁶ To these we might add groups around the world who are actively involved in repressing the rights of LGBTI individuals.

There are also examples of even more profound and systematic backlashes against movements for women's rights, sexual rights, and gender equality—the rise of nationalism and religious fundamentalisms throughout the world, most of which have men as central actors and very often have an anti-women's rights, homophobic and anti-gender-equality discourse.¹⁷⁷ The leaders of these movements may see "modernity," including progress towards gender equality, as a threat to the status quo and to traditional notions of manhood, and turn to nationalism and conservative interpretations of religion.¹⁷⁸ These conservative 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. These conservative backlashes are also often linked to men "losing power" in society (through loss of traditional roles, a changing labor market, loss of status, changing views of marriage, etc.) and their resulting

perceived need to assert themselves.¹⁷⁹ For example, in some post-Communist settings in Europe, disillusionment stemming from the failures of reform as well as economic distress has caused many to turn to the past for solutions, sometimes believing they've found the answer in extremist nationalist movements.¹⁸⁰

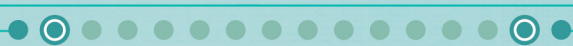
There is a need for activists and organizations working with men to be vocal in their opposition to these anti-feminist groups and movements and to hold these groups and movements accountable.¹⁸¹ As one activist has described: "The existence of men's-rights groups fuels a disabling climate for social and gender justice advocacy. However, it provides a critical opportunity for pro-feminist men to be explicit in their commitment and support to women's human rights and equality."¹⁸²



PART 4



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION



Gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls is one of the central goals of the post-2015 development agenda. In addition to being a Sustainable Development Goal (as SDG 5) in and of itself, gender equality and women's empowerment is a cross-cutting and necessary element of all of the proposed SDGs, including poverty eradication (SDG 1), quality education and life-long learning for all (SDG 4), sustainable economic growth (SDG 8), and reducing inequality within and among countries (SDG 10). From the above analysis and argument, it follows then that engaging men and boys in gender equality should be integral to the new global Post-2015 Development Agenda, and in particular to maintaining the momentum on addressing gender inequalities, strengthening human rights, promoting women's empowerment and leadership and improving the health and well-being of all.¹⁸³

RECOMMENDATION 1

Shift our normative understanding of men's role within the broader agenda for gender equality.

As emphasized throughout this paper, men are necessary stakeholders in transforming gender relations and leveling the playing field. While women's empowerment is essential to achieving gender equality, we must also engage men to be actively involved and committed to redistributing power and privilege in their personal lives and in larger spheres. Important as it is, it is not enough to engage men to be more participatory or equitable in their own individual lives—we must encourage them to question more pervasive and structural inequalities. For example, while many men may choose not to use

violence against women and girls in their own lives, they still have a responsibility to not be complicit in other men's use of violence and to advocate for services and policies that protect women and girls from violence.¹⁸⁴

Moreover, for too long we have regarded men as merely gatekeepers or allies when in fact they have much to gain from greater equality. Viewing men as stakeholders in gender equality and crafting positive messages of opportunity and benefits can help to draw more men in. For example, work with men has found that they will do more domestic work and childcare if they understand that it will lead to closer relationships with their children and a greater level of happiness, or that it will allow their wives to bring more income into the family.¹⁸⁵ Bringing the benefits of gender equality to the forefront, communicating with men about how gender equality is not simply something they have a role in, but something they have a stake in and benefit from, can be an effective framing for changing the discourse and motivating more men and boys to live out gender equality.

In shifting our normative understanding of men's role in gender equality, ***we need more research that seeks to understand the ways in which men and boys are already changing.*** Evidence from diverse settings—low, middle and upper income—confirm that as women and girls gain greater participation in the labor market, in education, and to some extent in decision-making roles, men are reacting to the changes.¹⁸⁶ While political activism and legislation are important catalysts, in order to identify ways to support and accelerate men's and boys' progress, more research is needed into the many ways in which they are already moving toward and living out gender equality. We also need more

research on negative changes—on the circumstances and contexts in which masculinities and power relations are becoming more rigid, including those of conflict, high unemployment rates, and migration. Understanding all of the factors contributing to both directions of change is essential to more effectively engaging men.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Build and act through shared understandings and alliances between men's work for gender equality and the women's rights fields, and other social justice movements.

While engagement of men and boys is an important piece of the gender equality agenda, it is neither a separate nor an isolated piece. True social change requires working with men and women, boys and girls, and across the various intersecting issues that influence their lives and opportunities. It is therefore critical that leaders and organizations working with men and boys from the onset engage in dialogue and collaboration with the many diverse groups and movements involved in promoting gender equality, particularly the women's rights movements.¹⁸⁷ Even where efforts will entail working with men and boys separately, it is essential that these efforts be planned in consultation with women's groups and others working on related issues.¹⁸⁸

Another important piece of the work with men and boys entails building partnerships with progressive social movements.¹⁸⁹ The work with men and boys, from violence prevention to greater participation in sexual and reproductive health, shares many goals with civil rights and other social justice movements, thus providing important opportunity for leveraging efforts. For

example, there are various points of synergy between organizations working to engage men and boys in gender equality and labor movements, which also have a role to play in the promotion of more progressive parental leave policies, in addressing the gender wage gap, and in ending sexual harassment in the workplace.¹⁹⁰ The progressive parental leave policies discussed earlier were the result of collaboration between several movements, including the feminist movement, parent groups, trade unions, and employers' federations, as well as organizations committed to working to engage men.¹⁹¹

Often, building alliances will first require "making the case" about working with men and boys, be it by affirming shared ideological commitments, addressing concerns, or articulating evidence of impact. As these alliances evolve, it will be essential that activists and practitioners working with men and boys be ever vigilant about their own often-privileged position within development and social networks, and actively commit themselves to challenging rigid leadership structures and negative power dynamics.¹⁹²

RECOMMENDATION 3

Take work with men from the program and project level into policies and institutions.

Despite the substantial body of evidence showing that gender interventions can change men's attitudes and practices, and despite many international commitments, the scale of gender equality work with men and boys is still limited. Accelerating change—moving from the personal to the structural—requires reaching larger numbers of men and boys and changing systems and institutions. Given the critical role

of public institutions (e.g., schools, the health sector, and the workplace) in the creation and maintenance of gender norms, and their potential to reach large numbers of individuals, they provide particularly strategic locations for scaling up efforts to engage men and boys.¹⁹³

For example, in addition to serving as venues in which to implement large-scale educational programs, workplace-based efforts provide the opportunity to challenge existing employment practices and culture that reinforce the unequal treatment of women and to establish new more-gender equitable structures, such as policies that encourage male workers to be more involved in parenting and domestic work.¹⁹⁴ Scaled-up efforts should also target the historically male social institutions, such as the military, sports, and prisons, where rigid norms are often reinforced.

In taking the work with men and boys to scale, it is important to think beyond changing the attitudes and behaviors of individual men in their personal lives. Increasing the reach and impact of efforts with men and boys also entails mobilizing men to effect change via their leadership roles, be it within labor unions, community-based organizations, political parties, or government bureaucracies, and holding them accountable for leadership and support of change through these roles.

Lastly, while there is already a sufficiently compelling amount of evidence to move forward in scaling-up, there is still a critical need for investment in longitudinal evaluation studies to determine the most effective interventions across a variety of settings and target populations.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Develop, implement and monitor policies to engage men in gender equality, and build state capacity to implement them.

In addition to extending the number and reach of well-designed interventions, we need to push forward with institutional and governmental policies that address the social and structural determinants of gender inequalities.¹⁹⁵ Through policy and legal reform, countries can institutionalize more gender-equitable relations in homes and offices, factories and fields, in government and on the street.¹⁹⁶ A recent multi-country review of existing gender equality policies found that while there are a growing number of policies that contemplate gender equality in ways that actively engage men, they are still few in number.¹⁹⁷

For example, the number and scope of maternity leave policies throughout the world, when compared to paternity leave policies (generally minimal, if and where they exist) reflect the ways in which policies are often rooted in and reinforce traditional stereotypes of men and boys as providers, not caregivers.¹⁹⁸ Moreover, where policies do mention and include gender and male engagement in thoughtful ways, there is often a huge gap between what is laid out in policy proclamations, national laws, and technical norms and what happens at the level of implementation.¹⁹⁹ ***Indeed, arguably as important as the policy itself is the building of trained staff to implement them and civil society to monitor their implementation, as well as ongoing public awareness campaigns about policies and education to transform perceptions of gender roles among men,*** and actors within institutions that interact with men as fathers, e.g., hospitals, schools, and family courts.

Below are examples of specific policy recommendations for engaging men in gender equality. As discussed earlier, this list is not a comprehensive policy agenda—rather it draws from where the existing work with men and boys has been concentrated. And while there is a need to continue to evolve and expand efforts in these areas it is also necessary to build up work with men and boys in other areas that shape gender inequalities, including the media, political participation and decision-making, and the environment.

- **Engage men in the prevention of gender-based violence:** Policies targeting gender-based violence should seek to change social norms and institutional cultures that perpetuate inequalities and violence.²⁰⁰ Integrated and well-formulated policies should include primary prevention targeting men and boys; policies to engage men and boys in making public spaces free of violence for women and girls; programs for male perpetrators that are integrated with the judicial sector; implementation of gun control; controls over alcohol sales; and legal, financial and psychosocial supports for survivors of violence, both women and men.²⁰¹ Given that men's witnessing of violence is a key driver of their own use of it, policies should also provide for psychosocial support for boys who witness violence, to break the cycle.²⁰²
- **Promote gender equitable socialization at all levels of education, from early childhood education to the tertiary level:** Because men and boys learn and internalize gender stereotypes and power dynamics early on, education and schools can play a key role in engaging them in

gender equity. Education policies should seek to ensure that schools are spaces for positive socialization. Curricula should move beyond gender stereotypes, and encourage critical thinking and cooperation. Comprehensive, gender-transformative sexuality education should also be an integral part of school curricula, addressing human rights and gender equality, offering accurate and complete information (such as the range of female-controlled contraceptive methods), focusing on positive sexuality and LGBTI issues, and building skills for negotiating sexual behavior.²⁰³ There should be training and support for teachers and administrators so that they can provide gender-sensitive learning environments that are also safe and inclusive.²⁰⁴ Such training should also emphasize the importance of the engagement of parents, including fathers, in school governing bodies and through community outreach.²⁰⁵

- **Engage men as fathers and caregivers:** Although fatherhood is a powerful entry-point for engaging men, the care of children is still one of the areas of least change. Most countries continue to offer only a few days or a week of paternity leave, reinforcing the norm that men are, at most, helpers in child care.²⁰⁶ The Nordic experience with more progressive paternity leave policies provides persuasive evidence of the potential to shift gender norms, attitudes, and practices in this area. They also point to the need for ongoing public awareness campaigns and education to transform perceptions of gender roles among men, as well as among actors within

institutions that interact with men as fathers—e.g. hospitals, schools, and family courts. Similarly, publicly supported fatherhood-preparation courses and information campaigns focusing on men's roles in the lives of children offer strategic opportunities to address fathers' reported feelings of being unprepared or ill-informed about caring for children, and help them perceive the benefits to themselves from greater participation in family life.²⁰⁷ Still, progressive parental leave policies and preparation resources are only the first step in engaging men as fathers. There is a need for policies that incorporate a life-cycle approach, encouraging and enabling men to share responsibility in caregiving throughout their children's lives, not just at the outset. Examples of such policies include flexible work hours and counting male as well as female employees when calculating the need for childcare facilities.²⁰⁸

- **Engage men in supporting women's economic empowerment:** There are various policy entry-points for engaging men to support women's economic empowerment. As discussed above, an important one focuses on redistributing caregiving responsibilities, thereby providing women with more choices and support in pursuing economic opportunities. Also, as colleagues, supervisors, and CEOs, men have an important role to play in advocating for and supporting policies that address inequalities in the workplace: from quotas and targeted hiring practices to anti-sexual harassment policies.²⁰⁹ In addition, such efforts must also go beyond the relatively limited gains that micro-credit often provides, to actually transforming income inequalities.

- **Engaging men as supportive partners, clients and positive agents of change in sexual and reproductive health and rights, and maternal, newborn and child health.** While we must continue to support and promote accessible sexual and reproductive health services and rights for women, we must also engage men and boys in transforming the rigid roles and norms that shape women's and men's sexual and reproductive health outcomes. As discussed above, school-based, evidence-based comprehensive sexuality education that promotes critical reflection about gender norms from an early age is an essential piece of engaging men and boys in sexual and reproductive health. Policies should seek to expand the availability and use of male contraception methods, and create spaces for men in prenatal and child health services, to name just a few examples.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Twenty years after Cairo, on the eve of 20 years since Beijing, and on the cusp of creating the new post-2015 development goals, gender equality—which is directly intertwined with economic inequality—continues to require urgent action. The overall review of the past 20 years reveals advances combined with ongoing challenges and the emergence of social and political forces that oppose gender equality. There are some accomplishments to celebrate, and there is a growing field of civil society dedicated to engaging men and boys, and masculinities in the process. But there is much to do—in particular to take the work from civil society into

public policies; to build better alliances between work with men and boys, the women's rights field, the LGBTI field and other social justice movements; to carry out more assessment, research and analysis of the changes that are happening; and to work collectively to bring more resources to gender equality efforts. ***A central part of these efforts is the need to see men and boys as stakeholders in gender equality and to obligate, engage, support and encourage men to overcome power inequalities, including giving up privilege, and at the same time to help them live and experience the benefits that gender equality brings for all of us.***

END NOTES

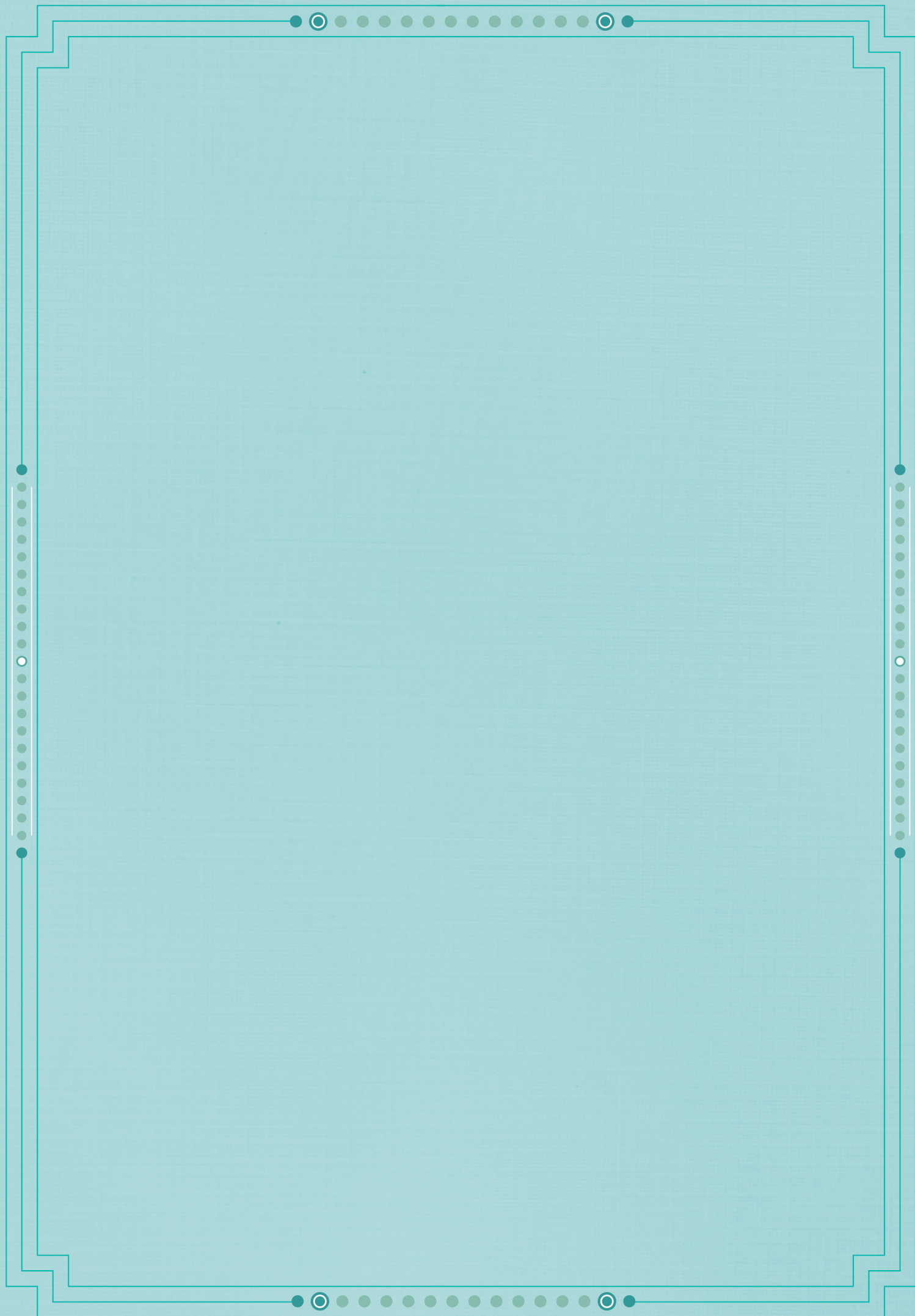
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