



IN BRIEF

# UN WOMEN'S WORK WITH MEN AND BOYS

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## Where we are in our work with men and boys

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which was an outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995), emphasized the principle of shared power and responsibility among women and men at home and in the workplace. Other landmark documents such as the outcomes of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development and the 48<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women encouraged men and boys to fully participate in actions to achieve gender equality.

Twenty years after Beijing, we know that while the women's movement must continue to lead the revolution for gender equality, engaging men in challenging the structures, beliefs, practices and institutions that sustain their own privileges and inequitable norms, has become an urgency.

As UN Women's Executive Director stated in the inaugural session of the 2nd MenEngage Global Symposium, which took place in New Delhi, India, in November 2014, "we see the engagement of men and boys (...) as a game-changer in shifting power relations to end discrimination against women and achieve gender equality."

Gender inequalities are defined by controlling forms of power. To achieve gender equality and women's empowerment means to promote and enact alternative forms of power, utilizing individual and collective strengths to work towards common goals without coercion or domination.

This transformation of power relations entails reframing the discourse of gender equality as relations among men and women to be more power equal. Masculinities can change over time, across and within settings and are not a unique rigid pattern of social behaviours. This transformation frees both genders to make choices in life. Providing, care giving, community roles, responsibility, leadership, become shared endeavours towards a common idea of citizenship that ultimately benefits all.

UN Women is engaging with experts, civil society members and men leaders on the issue of transformation of gender relations based on interrogating structures of male power and privilege. To frame the discussion, we have supported the development of the MenEngage discussion paper "[Men, Masculinities and Changing Power](#)", an overview of the work done in this area to date, and a substantive and critical dialogue about the way forward leading up to Beijing +20 and the outcomes of the post 2015 development agenda.

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## Key messages

- The notions of gender and privilege are invisible to men; making gender visible and confronting men's sense of entitlement are political strategies that can contribute to transform gender inequalities and power.
- Gender inequalities are structural and therefore the response has to be structural – to end violence against women it's critical to address the roots of the violence.
- To transform the discourse it is key to identify champions among men and generate role models of positive masculinity, especially among youth.
- When men become leaders of public institutions, private sector or faith-based groups, they have to be also held accountable if inequalities persist in these structures.
- The women's movement, in many parts of the world, has not linked up strongly enough with other social justice issues such as, racism, homophobia and the caste system. In the context of a globalized world, the gender revolution must be linked with other social and economic justice movements.

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**“You have to march with others if you want them to march with you.”**

- Amulya K.N. Reddy, Professor and scientist.

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- Poverty, conflicts and instability shape harmful masculinities, male power and identities.
- The proposed Sustainable Development Goals framework must reflect through its targets, key issues that help reshape the power dynamics and structures.
- UN Women's [HeForShe](#) campaign is one of the key platforms to raise voice and take action in engaging men and boys. The Global Symposium offered an opportunity to discuss how to move the campaign forward to stronger policy and programme advocacy and interventions. The campaign's spirit is to evolve towards a more decentralized agenda and nomenclature where actions can be taken autonomously by organizations or individuals, and the message sharpened to make clear it's a solidarity initiative led by the women's movement, whose authority and leadership have to be acknowledged and highlighted.

## Recommended policy areas and actions

1. Take work with men and boys from the programme and project level into policies and institutions.
2. Promote gender-equitable socialization. Reaching out to boys during their critically important formative stage will contribute to realising a new generation of men with more positive behaviours toward women, children, men and trans-people.
3. Engage boys and men in the prevention of gender-based violence.
4. Engage men as fathers and caregivers and in taking equal responsibility for unpaid care work.
5. Engage men as supportive partners, clients and positive agents of change in sexual and reproductive health and rights.



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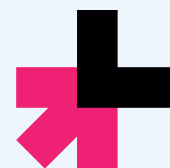
*UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka speaks at the 2nd MenEngage Global Symposium, which took place in New Delhi, India, in November 2014.*

**HEFORSHE**

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