



MenEngage Alliance

working with men and boys for gender equality

Summary Report

Virtual Roundtable Dialogue:

Roles and responsibilities of men and boys in response to #MeToo

Thursday, 14 December 2017

The global movement surrounding the viral hashtag #MeToo, in which many women, and some men, bravely share their experiences of sexual harassment and abuse, has sparked a surge in interest and concern about the persistence of gender-based violence and inequalities around the world, which many are considering a potential watershed moment for feminisms.

After the 2017 #MeToo movement emerged¹, MenEngage Alliance Global Secretariat released a [statement](#), expressing solidarity with survivors of abuse and **highlighting men's critical roles and responsibilities in putting an end to these persistent cultures of violence**. The statement provoked a lively debate among Alliance members, and ultimately led to the realization that, in order to appropriately address this complex issue, it is necessary to engage the membership in further debate and collectively 'crowdsource' ideas and solutions. MenEngage Alliance is a global network of activists, experts, practitioners, researchers and NGOs, made up of women's rights, SRHR, gender justice and engaging men and boys-focused organizations, working towards achieving women's rights and gender justice for all through a collective platform.

To this end, MenEngage Alliance Global Secretariat organized a virtual discussion "Roles and responsibilities of men and boys in response to #MeToo", as a safe-space for critical reflection and collective exploration on the engagement of men and boys in addressing the issues surfaced by #MeToo. The discussion aimed to explore three broad questions:

- What have MenEngage Alliance members around the world been doing in response to #MeToo, and the increased eye on the roles and responsibilities of men and boys towards women's rights and gender justice?
- What are we suggesting or urging men who are interested in being part of solving the global problem of sexual abuse and harassment to do?
- What can we all do, to build movements to end violence, to end unequal power-over structures, to end patriarchy?

Panellists for the roundtable included:

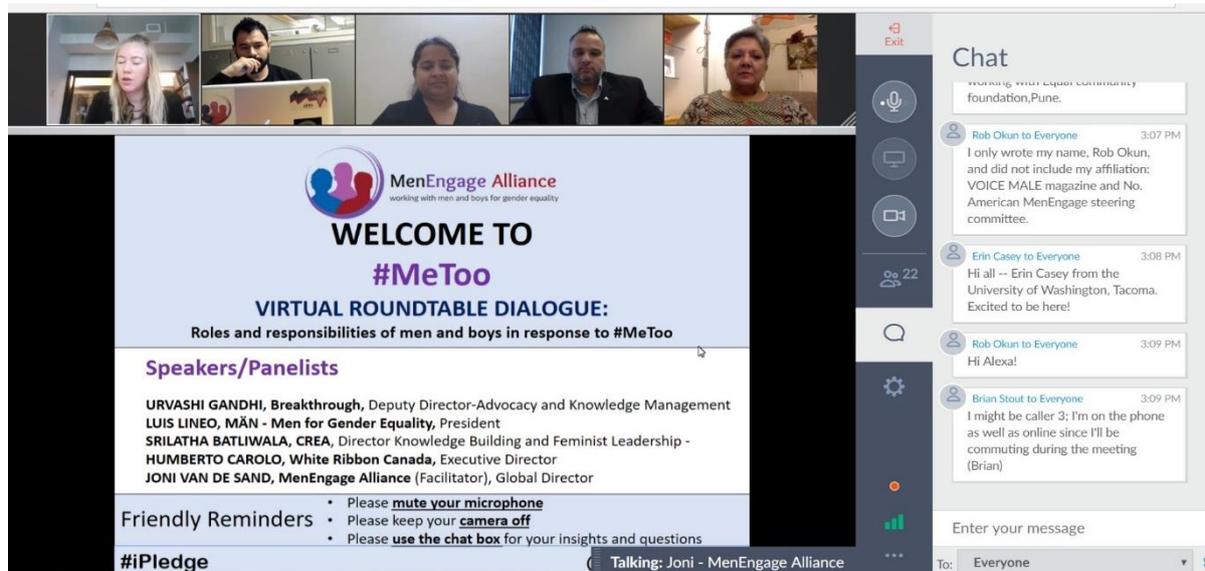
- **Srilatha Batliwala**, Director of Knowledge Building and Feminist Leadership – CREA (India)
- **Humberto Carolo**, Executive Director - White Ribbon Canada
- **Urvashi Gandhi**, Deputy Director, Community Mobilisation – Breakthrough (India)

¹ #MeToo was founded by Tarana Burke in 2007, to aid sexual assault survivors in underprivileged communities, especially the experiences of young and vulnerable brown or black women. It sparked into what has been called a movement in 2017, when it was popularized as a #hashtag by Hollywood actresses on Twitter, soon after soon after the public revelations of [sexual misconduct allegations](#) against Hollywood mogul [Harvey Weinstein](#).

- **Luis Lineo**, President MÄN - Men for Gender Equality (Sweden)
- **Joni van de Sand**, Director – Global Secretariat, MenEngage Alliance (Facilitator)

Over 20 MenEngage Alliance activists from around the world participated through an interactive “chat box” for questions and observations, resulting in a dynamic virtual conversation.

The following report outlines the main discussion points and ways forward suggested by participants to address cultures of violence, from changing the individual attitudes and behaviours of men and boys, to transforming broader systems to eliminate violence and injustices.



A screenshot from the virtual roundtable dialogue

Impact of the #MeToo movement

#MeToo has had a remarkable impact in almost every corner of the globe, albeit in different ways. Participants in India shared that #MeToo created the second major shift in recent times in terms of public awareness of sexual harassment and violence, the first being the reaction to the brutal gang rape of a young woman in Delhi in 2012. The difference this time, is the attention drawn to the whole spectrum of sexual violence that women face. While women in India have been speaking out against this violence for a long time, it seems that they are now finally being heard, and men are beginning to realize the scale of the problem. They also shared that, while this increased awareness is encouraging, it is happening at a political moment in the country in which a right-wing fundamentalist regime is reinforcing traditional gender roles in society. These two contrasting world views are coming up against each other, and in many cases those who have spoken out using #MeToo have faced further violence.

In Canada, #MeToo has caused a huge surge in interest among men and boys wanting to get involved in White Ribbon - a campaign that calls on men to pledge to never to commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women - and a groundswell in media interest in these topics. The #MeToo movement has enabled White Ribbon to take a next step and have these conversations with men in positions of power. The organization has been contacted by business, tech and political leaders who seek to more meaningfully engage ending sexual harassment in the workplace.

#MeToo has had a dramatic impact in Sweden, resulting in the resignation of men in power at all levels of society. It is being described as a ‘second revolution’ for women, in which their voices are finally being heard and taken seriously. Swedish organization MÄN has also experienced an enormous

increase in interest by men to discuss their roles in ending sexual harassment, resulting in the organization's membership doubling in just three weeks.

Discussion points

Participants agreed that #MeToo is about more than just individual cases of violence by men against women, but rather ending the widespread culture of violence that pervades in our societies, in which the majority of violence is perpetrated by men. A widespread frustration at the complacency of what have been symbolically called 'good' men, that don't use violence, was acknowledged. While #MeToo shocked many men, many have distanced the movement from themselves and failed to see their responsibility to change the situation. Participants reminded us of a quote by Desmond Tutu: "If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor," It was acknowledged that often in this field we are preaching to the 'converted' men, and how #MeToo has shown the need to reach the many 'unconverted' men, as well the responsibility of 'converted' men to bring other men into the conversation and make the spaces they occupy feminist. It was agreed that **reaching these 'good' men around the world, helping them see that inaction is complicity, and mobilizing them to act is as a key challenge and necessity stemming from the #MeToo movement.**

Participants stressed that #MeToo is not an attack on all men, it is an invitation to be part of the solutions. For men to accept this invitation, it is necessary to be able to provide men with concrete examples of actions they can take, as well as appealing alternatives to the traditional models of masculinity. Participants suggested developing contextualized toolkits, providing men with concrete actions they can take to bring an end to violence and harassment in their various spheres of influence, from the family, to the workplace and the community. **The importance of creating spaces for men to have these difficult conversations with one another was stressed, and of having support networks in order to take collective actions.**

There was considerable discussion around language and framing, particularly the terms 'action heroes', 'good men' and appeals to men to be 'real men' and not use violence. **Several participants stressed the importance of not reinforcing men's protector role in appeals to men and boys** and warned of the **risk of putting men who engage in efforts to end gender-based violence on a 'pedestal', simply for doing the right thing and what women's rights activists have been doing for decades.** Participants agreed that different terminology may be needed to appeal to specific groups of men, and that each organization must find their own balance in terms of language and framing within the contexts where they operate. Participants warned that too much hesitation around language, however, can lead to paralysis and prevent from being able to take the action that is needed on this issue.

Accountability to women's rights organizations and activists was seen as central in all efforts around #MeToo, as well as the need to keep the focus on survivors of sexual harassment and abuse. There was some debate as to the importance of men-only spaces versus mixed-gender spaces, while discussing sexual harassment and violence with men. A balance needs to be found between not 'burdening' women with the responsibility for men's personal transformation, and ensuring women's voices are heard. It was also recognized that, **while engaging men and boys is an important strategy in ending sexual harassment and abuse, it is only one of many strategies needed, including concerted efforts with women and girls to empower and uphold the rights of women and girls.**

A key takeaway from the event was the need for multi-level approaches to abolish cultures of violence. Participants shared examples of initiatives at each level, from individual to institutional, that they have been involved in since #MeToo, as well as ongoing initiatives to engage men and boys in transforming violent expressions of masculinities.

Individual and relationship level transformation

Participants acknowledged that personal transformation is often the first step for men and boys, and can spur engagement at other levels. They shared examples of how they have been working with men and boys to create change at the individual and relationship levels:

- White Ribbon Canada has updated the pledge it was founded upon – *to never commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women and girls*. The pledge urges men to model equitable behaviour and encourages men in positions of leadership to assess the systems around them and make sure gender equality is addressed at those levels.
- White Ribbon Canada are also implementing the campaign '20 minutes 4 Change', a platform for action encouraging fathers to pledge 20 minutes to talk to their sons about sexual consent.
- MÄN responded to #MeToo by holding a meeting with men who wanted to be part of the change and creating men's discussion groups, to provide them with the opportunity to talk about these issues. The organization have trained men to facilitate these groups, and over 40 such groups have been created. In those groups, women's voices are integrated and their perspectives shared, listened to and discussed with the men in the groups.
- MÄN has also promoted 5 actions among the Swedish public for men to respond to #MeToo, from listening, to self-reflection, to taking action.
- #Guytalk is a method for starting conversations about what it's like to be a man, started by Swedish organization Make Equal. The initiative provides men with tools to hold 'guy talks' in their homes, clubs or workplaces to discuss gender equality. This is considered a first step to mobilize men towards becoming part of a critical mass of people actively engaged in ending (sexual) violence.

Community mobilization

Participants emphasized the need for men to be 'active bystanders' and highlighted these initiatives that support men to actively support gender equality in their communities:

- Breakthrough's campaign 'Bell Bajao' or 'Ring the Bell' urges local residents to ring the doorbell when they hear domestic violence occurring and interrupting the violence. Through effective video communications the campaign has reached millions of people in India and around the world.
- Bangladeshi organization Blank Noise mobilizes men and women to become 'Action Heroes', and engage with men in their communities on the street to have difficult conversations and reflect on issues of sexual harassment and gender-based violence.
- HARASSmap is an initiative in Egypt which enables anyone who experiences or witnesses sexual harassment to report the incident, and these places are then marked on a map. HARASSmap volunteers visit the areas where incidences have occurred to raise awareness about what constitutes sexual harassment and to work towards ending it. By meeting with local shop owners, police officers, doormen and other public venues, the HARASSmap team is working to mobilize them to make their neighbourhoods "harassment-free zones".
- Next Gen Men have developed '10 Tips for Engaging Boys and Young Men in Gender Equity and Transformative Masculinities' based on their experience running school based programmes with young boys.

Institutional transformation

Participants stressed the need to ensure that the level of individual interest created by #MeToo is translated into the **transformation of institutions where gender inequalities are perpetuated, such as in businesses, schools and universities, and the media.**

- In particular, participants noted the need to engage with children through the education system, starting at preschool level before harmful gender norms develop. Participants recommended the introduction of comprehensive sexuality education in all schools, as well as curricula that covers gender, human rights and ideas of power, privilege and hierarchy.
- Men for Gender Equality were invited to hold a discussion on men and #MeToo with Sweden's top business and tech leaders where there was considerable interest in engaging with this topic. The organization are now seeking to work with five companies as leaders on this topic and exploring ways to engage with the private sector.
- White Ribbon Canada launched Parker P. a social enterprise arm of White Ribbon, which collaborates with private sector companies, governments, and institutions to promote gender equality.
- White Ribbon Canada have developed curricula on gender based violence for preschool to high school students and train teachers and train teachers to implement these curricula.
- MERGE for Gender Equality have just piloted a training called "Developing Healthy Boys - Raising Emotionally and Socially Connected Boys" for early childhood educators and allied professionals

Structural level change

Participants discussed the need to ensure that #MeToo momentum is **translated into social, cultural and political transformation, in other words, systemic change which dismantle the pre-conditions for rampant sexual violence, misogyny and sexism.** At the same time, many noted that this broader systems change was more complex to work on and measure impact on, despite the mass mobilization of the #MeToo movement pointing towards concrete shifts in our global consciousness around sexual violence. While much of the attention around #MeToo has been on the actions of individual men, there has been relatively little focus on patriarchy as a system and how it is perpetuated. As well, they stressed the need to connect the issues surfaced by #MeToo with broader systems of oppression such as racism, homophobia, neoliberal capitalism etc.

Some examples of members working at the political level include:

- Men for Gender Equality have started to create a network of politicians in the Swedish parliament and members of almost all major parties in Sweden have signed up and pledged to make ending gender-based violence their main election promise.

Conclusion

Provided that survivors are being taken seriously, and men and boys who are part of the problem begin taking responsibility to call out men's violence and cultures of violence and impunity more broadly, the #MeToo movement could indeed be a watershed moment for eliminating sexual violence and harassment, and lasting social change. MenEngage Alliance will continue to facilitate conversations among activists around these issues on the particular roles and responsibilities of men and boys, and social norms transformation of violent notions of masculinities, as one contribution to ongoing feminist organizing and activism. . We commit to working together to problematize men's roles and responsibilities in creating and sustaining cultures that enable sexual harassment and abuse. We jointly call on men to hold other men, including those in positions of power and authority, to account for their actions in the post-#MeToo world.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to us at info@menengage.org with any questions or comments on the issues raised by this dialogue, or if you are interested in participating in our next dialogue.

ANNEX

Crowd-Sourced Resources

Virtual Roundtable Dialogue

Roles and responsibilities of men and boys in response to #MeToo

The following resources were shared by panelists and participants of the Virtual Roundtable Dialogue: Roles and responsibilities of men and boys in response to #MeToo, hosted by the MenEngage Global Secretariat. We are hereby collecting and sharing them as start point in our mapping of what work is being done with men and boys in response to #MeToo.

INDIVIDUAL TRANSFORMATION, COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION & CAMPAIGNS

White Ribbon Canada

White Ribbon Pledge - Since 1991 men have worn white ribbons as a pledge to never commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women and girls. Now a global movement, further mobilization can be done by taking the pledge

<https://www.whiteribbon.ca/pledge.html>

20 Minutes 4 Change

A platform for action, with accompanying script, encouraging all dads to pledge 20 minutes to talk to their sons about sexual consent. The goal is to create a movement by building awareness of the issue and drive dads to act. As a result, dads pledged over 100,000 minutes to talk to their sons about consent

<http://20minutes4change.org/>

MÄN – Men for Gender Equality Sweden

A Swedish non-governmental organisation in the field of engaging men and boys in gender equality and violence prevention. The Swedish name of the organization is *Män för Jämställdhet*. Men for Gender Equality focuses on social norms of masculinities; how they are formed, how they influence society, relations and individuals, and how they can be reformed to contribute to gender equality, freedom from violence and better health for women, girls, boys and men.

<http://mfj.se/>

Equal Community Foundation

Work with adolescent boys with the mission of raising every boy in India to be gender equitable. We have built structured curriculum to support boys in their journey from awareness to taking actions at peer and community level. We also measure the impact of this journey through the Monitoring and Evaluation framework

ecf.org.in

<https://sites.google.com/ecf.org.in/projectraise/home>

CREA

Based in New Delhi, India, is one of the few international women's rights organisations based in the global South, led by Southern feminists, which works at the grassroots, national, regional, and international levels. Together with partners from a diverse range of human rights movements and networks, CREA works to advance the rights of women and girls, and the sexual and reproductive freedoms of all people. CREA advocates for positive social change through national and international fora, and provides training and learning opportunities to global activists and leaders through its Institutes.

<http://www.creaworld.org/>

BLANK NOISE Movement

Blank Noise is a community of 'Action Heroes', individuals and citizens united to eradicate gender based and sexual violence. Initiated in 2003, as a response to street harassment as a final graduation project, Blank Noise has grown into a multi city/country collective led by its Action Heroes.

"Meet to Sleep" Campaign and Community Mobilization – part of the Blank Noise² movement, which is built by its Action Heroes, ie you. Blank Noise creates participatory projects mobilising citizens and persons to become Action Heroes. The movement has grown across over 52 cities and towns in India and globally, having participated in varying degrees, in over 300 projects and interventions. In this initiative, women were mobilized to sleep in public parks as a means to reclaiming their right to be in public spaces typically dominated by men.

<http://www.blanknoise.org/meet-to-sleep/>

<http://blog.blanknoise.org/>

Breakthrough

Ring the Bell Campaign: Ring the Bell represents the global expansion of our best-known and multi-award-winning campaign, Bell Bajao ("ring the bell" in Hindi), which launched in India in 2009 and swiftly went viral across several continents. It successfully positioned men as partners in challenging domestic violence—and put the power to end violence against women in millions of hands across South Asia and beyond.

<http://us.breakthrough.tv/campaigns/ring-the-bell/>

MERGE for Equality

Works to advance the beliefs, thoughts, and behaviors that allow men and boys to be their authentic selves and embrace their role in ensuring gender equality.

<http://www.mergeforequality.org/>

Enough Is Enough Campaign – (#EnoughIsEnough) (Shared by MERGE for Equality as a relevant campaign)

<https://www.facebook.com/events/170294246899261/>

Roots of Empathy

Roots of Empathy's mission is to build caring, peaceful, and civil societies through the development of empathy in children and adults. Roots of Empathy strives to break the intergenerational cycle of violence and poor parenting.

<http://www.rootsofempathy.org/>

GuyTalk- Dinner Initiative (shared by NextGenMen)

#Guytalk is a method for starting conversations about what it's like to be a man, based on different themes. The initiative was started by Make Equal as a reaction on a wave of sexual assaults at Swedish music festivals during the summer of 2016. The ambition with #Guytalk is to give guys and men the chance to start with themselves when working towards an equal society for all.

http://www.killmiddag.se/index_eng.html

MEDIA

VoiceMale Magazine

Invitation to share work being carried out around #MeToo for an upcoming edition of VoiceMale

Magazine, as a means to further mobilize and movement build globally. If everyone on this call wants to submit a short (300 or 400 word) piece about some of your ideas about how we respond at this moment, send to rob@voicemalemagazine.org Submissions would be welcomed by the end of December.

<http://voicemalemagazine.org/>

INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

White Ribbon Canada

Resources on sexual violence prevention, healthy relationship resources and a guide for teachers in the education system

<http://www.dtl.whiteribbon.ca/>

Men of Quality Initiative

White Ribbon launched Parker P. - a for-profit consultation arm of White Ribbon, collaborating with international non-government organizations, post-secondary institutions and private sector companies to promote gender equality. Drawing on more than two decades of White Ribbon expertise, Parker P. crafts and implements tailor-made strategies for each client's business environment. <https://www.menofquality.ca/>

MERGE for Equality

Two-day training: Developing Healthy Boys - Raising Emotionally and Socially Connected Boys; for early childhood educators and allied professionals

<http://www.mergeforequality.org/training-and-consulting/fall-2017-training/>

Next Gen Men

10 Tips for Engaging Boys and Young Men in Gender Equity and Transformative Masculinities (from Next Gen Men youth and middle school program)

<https://nextgenmen.ca/10-tips/>

STRUCTURAL CHANGE

Resources on challenging male supremacy and community accountability:

Challenging Male Supremacy Project (CMS) - New York City area

Is committed to strengthening the capacities of men and masculine-identified people to challenge male supremacist practices, as one part of expansive movements for collective liberation. Central to this process is the creation of structured educational spaces for activists and organizers to develop shared feminist analysis and practice. We do this work with support from and in collaboration with local feminist, queer and trans justice groups.

<http://challengingmalesupremacy.org/our-work/community-accountability/>

ZAPAGRINGO

Independent blog on community accountability.

<http://zapagringo.blogspot.com/2010/06/challenging-male-supremacy-project.html>

The Establishment

Parallels between the anti-racism movement as an input towards anti-patriarchy/gender justice efforts

<https://theestablishment.co/welcome-to-the-anti-racism-movement-heres-what-you-ve-missed-711089cb7d34>

Anti-racism movement: Exploration of notions of dominance Vs Partnership

Riane Eisler work with an exploration of notions of domination vs partnership, highlighting how society reproduces the norms established in the family. So any serious progress will depend on upending the "man as authoritarian head of household" model that continues to prevail

<http://www.rianeeisler.com/building-an-integrated-progressive-agenda-the-post-election-crisis-and-its-opportunities/>