

Johannesburg Declaration and Call to Action

October 9th, 2009

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

From Cape Town to Kivu to Cairo, from Abidjan to Antananarivo, all across Africa, men are beginning to work for gender justice in their families and communities. Together with women's rights organisations, national and local governments, religious and traditional leaders and a wide range of community-based organisations, men and boys are taking courageous stands against domestic and sexual violence, mobilising to reduce the spread and impact of HIV and AIDS and committing themselves to deepening democracy and strengthening human rights across the continent.

We know that men are implicated in health and human rights crises across Africa. Men are also essential for their successful resolution – whether it be stopping sexual violence in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo; accelerating demilitarisation and disarmament in Central and East Africa; preventing new HIV infections, expanding treatment and reducing the burden of AIDS care borne by women and girls across the entire continent; increasing men's active involvement in the lives of their children; strengthening health systems or promoting a more active sense of citizenship aimed at holding governments to account for their commitments.

We now have evidence that well implemented gender transformative interventions can bring about significant changes in men's gender and HIV related attitudes and practices, and can benefit families and communities. However, meaningful change at the societal level, requires civil society and government to work together to increase the scale and impact of these interventions. In other areas innovative new interventions are required. Attaining change requires all stakeholders to work together, including individuals, NGOs, media, academics, donors, governments and international organisations. It is particularly important that the gender equality work that focuses on working with men and boys needs to develop in conjunction with and build on the work done by the women's movement. To achieve transformative and sustainable social change around gender inequalities, we must go beyond scattered, short-term and small scale interventions and harness all efforts towards systemic, large-scale, and coordinated action.

The principles that inform this declaration and this work include a commitment to gender equality, human rights, feminist analysis, inclusion, transparency, accountability and social justice. This declaration and call to action is intended to present a unified set of education, advocacy, policy and research priorities identified at the MenEngage Africa Symposium held in Johannesburg Oct 5-9th 2009, attended by over 240 delegates from 25 countries to advance work with men and boys for gender equality.

PART 2: PREVIOUS COMMITMENTS

International and UN Commitments: Through the UN and other international agreements, the nations of the world have committed themselves to taking action to involve men and boys in achieving gender equality. Policy makers have an obligation to act on these commitments to develop, implement and evaluate policy and programming approaches to working with men. These commitments provide civil society activists with leverage to demand implementation.

Johannesburg Declaration and Call to Action

These international commitments include:

- The International Conference on Population and Development (1994)
- The Programme of Action of the World Summit on Social Development (1995)
- The Beijing Platform for Action (1995)
- The Twenty-Sixth Special Session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS (2001)
- The Abuja Declaration on HIV and AIDS (2001)
- The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), at its 48th session (2004) and the 53rd session (2009)
- The Commonwealth Kampala Declaration on Transforming Societies to Achieve Political, Economic and Human Development (2007)

Regional Commitments: In Africa, policy makers have also made clear their commitment to gender transformation through the ratification of:

- The (Banjul) African Charter on Human and People's Rights (1981)
- The Maputo Protocol (2003)
- The Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (2004)
- The Southern African Development Community (SADC) Gender Protocol (2006)

This Declaration builds on the Rio Declaration issued at the first global MenEngage Symposium held in Rio de Janeiro in 2009, and should be read in conjunction with it.

The time has come for us to fulfil these commitments.

PART 3: TOPICS OF PARTICULAR IMPORTANCE IN AFRICA

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Across the continent, women are subjected to physical, sexual, emotional and economic violence at the hands of men. Society often colludes with those who commit acts of gender-based violence (GBV) and sanctions impunity. Violence against women is a gross violation of women's human rights and results in ill health and reduced quality of life. GBV contributes to the spread of HIV and a greater focus should be placed on this intersection. Attention also needs to be focussed on the role that alcohol and substance abuse plays in increasing the levels of GBV and HIV in society.

In order to prevent GBV, it is important to work with men and women to change the social norms perpetuating GBV. This includes working with men to provide alternative, positive and non-violent role models for young men and boys, who often turn to violence after being exposed to violence against women at an early age, in their homes and communities.

We acknowledge that migrants, refugees, internally displaced persons and others who are forced to migrate from their homes, are particularly vulnerable to different types of GBV. People with disabilities are also particularly vulnerable to GBV and continue to be exploited due to societal stigma.

There is much violence that goes beyond what is traditionally understood as GBV. These forms of violence often have gendered features. Men and boys are subjected to violence primarily from other men. This includes gang violence, school bullying and homophobia-related violence. Men and boys face higher homicide rates than women worldwide. These deaths – the vast majority gun-related – are preventable and are directly linked to pressures to demonstrate masculinity, no matter the harm to self or others.

Johannesburg Declaration and Call to Action

We call on:

- Men and boys to speak out, confront and challenge other men and boys who use violence against women, and support them to change
- International organisation to mainstream work with men and boys across GBV and HIV programmes.
- Governments and all relevant stakeholders, including especially departments of education, to integrate a focus on healthy masculinities and the promotion of gender equality into school curricula and teacher training programmes.
- Governments to create and enforce laws which protect against domestic violence and sexual violence, including marital rape.
- Governments to dedicate resources towards the prosecution and prevention of GBV.
- Governments to allocate budget to fund programmes that provide support for survivors of GBV, including counselling, support in relation to HIV, post-exposure prophylaxis and emergency contraception.
- Governments to draw up ethical, legal and programmatic standards for rehabilitative work with men who commit violence against women.
- Governments to take special measure to prevent violence against sexual minorities.
- Civil society to scale up programmes working with men and boys to prevent GBV.
- Donors to fund and researchers to prioritise studying the impact of programmes engaging men and boys to prevent GBV.
- Religious and traditional leaders to condemn violence against women outright and to not condone GBV based on reasons of tradition
- Media to not perpetuate stereotypes of masculinity that appear to condone GBV.

HIV & AIDS

The HIV pandemic is one of the key challenges facing Africa. HIV and AIDS are devastating communities across the continent, with sub-Saharan Africa accounting for 60% of all people in the world living with HIV, and access to life-saving treatment still unavailable to many.

The link between gender-based violence and HIV is well documented. Gender inequalities make women more vulnerable to contracting HIV and leave women and children with an unfair and debilitating burden of care for those sick with HIV, and for orphans and vulnerable children. Rigid gender norms also increase men's vulnerability to HIV by encouraging men to equate manhood with risk-taking and pursuit of multiple sexual partners.

The economic marginalisation of women, and certain minorities, such as those with alternative sexual orientation, can make people more vulnerable to HIV infection, for example by necessitating engagement in transactional sex. People with disabilities face a particular set of needs in relation to HIV & AIDS, including informational needs, and appropriate services should be targeted towards them.

Significant efforts need to be made to increase the scale and impact of interventions that aim to transform gender norms in order to prevent the spread of HIV and address the gender imbalances in care and support.

We call on:

- Men to protect themselves and their partners from HIV and AIDS
- Men to assume an equitable share of the care responsibility for those living with HIV and AIDS.

Johannesburg Declaration and Call to Action

- International organisations and governments to work together to increase the scale and impact of interventions that aim to transform gender norms in the prevention, care and treatment of HIV.
- Governments to meet their international and domestic commitments to increase access to HIV treatment.
- Governments to develop or expand programmes that engage men in preventing mother to child transmission of HIV, including making health centres (maternal units) more accessible to men.
- Governments to scale up medical male circumcision programmes.
- Governments to put in place services that increase men's use of HIV testing and treatment facilities and other health services. Testing should be voluntary, confidential and linked to treatment services.
- Governments to ensure that appropriate and targeted information, counselling and HIV and reproductive health services are easily accessible to men and boys.
- Governments to commit to sustained funding for HIV prevention, treatment and care.
- Governments to ensure that HIV-related services are accessible to and address the particular needs of minorities, including people with disabilities.
- Civil society to scale up behavioural change interventions that specifically target men and boys.
- Donors to fund, and researchers to prioritise research on HIV prevention strategies, and the intersection of gender norms, masculinities and HIV and AIDS.
- Employers to ensure that those who are HIV positive are not discriminated against, that workplaces are supportive to those affected by HIV/AIDS and that they facilitate men in playing a caregiving role for those with AIDS. Special attention to this is required where migrant labour is employed.
- Media to not perpetuate stereotypes of masculinity which promote irresponsible sexual behaviour and multiple concurrent partnerships.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS

Across Africa, sexual and reproductive health (SRH) is largely considered a women's domain, leaving women and girls primarily responsible for their own and their family's sexual and reproductive health. It should be noted that men and women have differing sexual health needs, all of which should be addressed.

SRH rights are important human rights. However, these rights are often constrained by gender inequalities and gender stereotypes. In order for men, women, boys and girls to be able to enjoy their SRH rights, they need to be educated about them, be given viable ways to assert them, and be given the power to make choices about their own bodies and well-being. Men and boys often do not utilise SRH services and sometimes face barriers accessing such services. As such, they often present health problems very late or behave in ways that put themselves and their partners at risk.

Interventions with men and boys on SRH have been shown to effectively increase men's support for their partner's SRH and to improve the health of men, women and children. It is essential that we scale-up this work, within a framework which exhibits a positive approach to sexuality and sexual pleasure.

We call on:

- Men to take responsibility for their own SRH and to support their partners and families in addressing their SRH needs.
- International organisations to roll-out SRH services to under-serviced areas, ensuring that these facilities include services catering to male SRH needs.
- Governments to assess existing local and national policies on SRH to see the extent to which they engage with men and boys, and to amend/update these policies where necessary.

Johannesburg Declaration and Call to Action

- Governments to ensure that sex workers, migrant workers, displaced persons, refugees and other non-nationals can access SRH programmes and services.
- Governments and civil society to ensure that SRH programmes and services specifically target men and boys.
- Governments to ensure that existing clinics provide a range of SRH services, beyond traditional family planning, build the capacity of their staff and include a strong focus on addressing inequitable gender norms.
- Civil society to take action to raise awareness and knowledge among men and boys on a range of SRH issues, particularly condom use as an effective STI/HIV prevention method, and to include commitments to this in their workplans.
- Civil society to promote the role of men in the SRH of women, in particular supporting women's access to safe abortion services and preventing maternal mortality.
- Donors to fund research, and researchers to undertake studies which develop a stronger understanding of men's SRH, and the links between gender inequalities, men's sexual behaviour and SRH across Africa.
- Donors to provide funds to ensuring a stronger focus on engaging men and boys within SRH interventions.

CULTURE, RELIGION AND HUMAN RIGHTS

We affirm the importance of traditional and cultural practices many of which incorporate values that demand respect for all people and promote human rights. Unfortunately a range of traditional practices discriminate against women, violate women's rights, and reinforce harmful stereotypes of masculinity. Patriarchal attitudes and harmful cultural practices (such as female circumcision, unsafe circumcision for boys, ukuthwala (abduction of brides), bride price, widow inheritance, polygamy and forced marriages) should be modified to the extent that they are harmful.

We similarly acknowledge and affirm the positive role that religion plays for many people in Africa and recognise and commend the extensive work that religious groups are doing to provide care in the context of HIV/AIDS, support for orphaned and vulnerable children, humanitarian assistance and poverty relief. Unfortunately responses from some religious groups compromise HIV prevention and promote stereotyped gender roles which undermine gender equality. Conservative attitudes towards sexual minorities stigmatise and marginalise sexual minorities. We note with concern the trend towards increasing conservatism amongst many faith-based organisations and their intent to reverse gains that have been made in the area of equality and building a human rights culture in the region.

We call on:

- Men, including individual religious and traditional leaders, to practice gender equality within their traditions, cultures and religions.
- Governments to create laws protecting people from harmful practices.
- Governments to be clear about conflicts between human rights, culture and religion, and to affirm the centrality and universality of human rights in these situations.
- Civil society organisations to work with traditional and religious leaders to explore ways in which tradition, culture and religion can promote gender equality.
- Religious institutions to include women in leadership positions.
- Religious leaders to promote gender equitable practices.
- Media to not present human rights violations as being acceptable traditional practices.

Johannesburg Declaration and Call to Action

CONFLICT AND POST-CONFLICT

Much of the violence in conflict is gendered. Large numbers of men and boys are used as combatants into armies and armed groups. In conflict, a large number of men and boys are killed because they are combatants or have potential to act as combatants. One should note that women too are drafted into fighting groups and are killed at times of conflict.

The use of sexual violence as a weapon of war by armed groups and armies is a disturbing phenomenon. In recent conflicts around Africa, women and girls have been targeted in a systematic manner. This is done both to terrorise women, and to terrorise men and send a message to entire communities.

Conflict leaves everyone vulnerable to GBV and HIV. Internally displaced persons and refugees who have fled their homes as a result of conflict are particularly vulnerable to GBV and the threat of contracting HIV.

We call on:

- Men and boys in conflict and post-conflict settings to take a stand against and refrain from participating in sexual violence.
- International organisations to ensure that there is a focus on gender and the protection of women in all humanitarian response.
- International organisations to ensure that women associated with fighting groups are accounted for in demobilisation processes.
- The United Nations and international organisations to take action to protect women and children in times of conflict, particularly from sexual violence.
- Governments and military leaders to take action to prevent sexual violence by troops, and to discipline those who are found committing these acts.
- Governments to uphold United Nations Security Council Resolutions, including Resolutions 1308, 1325, 1612 and 1820.
- Civil society, communities and government to work together to improve responses to early warning systems aimed at preventing conflict, and to play a part in transition processes and peace building after war.
- Donors to insist on the mainstreaming of gender into all conflict and post-conflict response.

YOUTH

Working with young people is essential to building more gender-equitable societies. Young people are often more open to learning and adopting new behaviours and norms. Whilst some efforts are being made to involve young people in interventions, youth are largely considered as targets or clients and not as partners in these programmes. Efforts are needed to develop the technical and financial capacity of young people to implement sustainable HIV/AIDS and gender transformative programmes that specifically focus on young people.

Research shows that young people are more likely to have multiple concurrent sexual partners. Interventions aimed at young people should address this. They should also recognise the important role that religious institutions play in raising young people, and the influence of all forms of media in shaping young people's opinions and behaviours.

Attention should also be paid to children, to the experiences of children and to incorporating children's views into programmes.

Johannesburg Declaration and Call to Action

We call on:

- Young people to take responsibility in creating global and country level leadership.
- International organisations, civil society organisations and governments, to provide funding and ensure capacity building and the professional development of young people working in HIV and gender equitable programming.
- International organisations, civil society organisations and governments to involve young people in all stages of programming, from planning and development to implementation and evaluation.
- Governments to set up or strengthen programmes that address inequitable gender norms within schools.
- Governments to promote policies that protect youth and children from gender-based violence.
- Governments and civil society to strengthen behavioural change programmes aimed at reducing multiple concurrent partnership.
- Government and civil society stakeholders in the health sector to provide male youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services.
- Religious leaders and groups to promote and create spaces to advance gender justice among young people.
- Media to play a more responsible role with respect to the messaging around gender relations and HIV, as well as providing young people with a platform to shape their agenda.

FATHERHOOD AND CAREGIVING

Responsible fatherhood is an essential component of any attempt to transform families and societies to better reflect gender equity and protect child rights. There is a strong evidence base that demonstrates the importance of men's involvement as fathers to the development of children. Since gender norms are often shaped during childhood, positive fatherhood can play an important role in challenging the transmission of damaging gender stereotypes and harmful power relations.

Around the world work that relates to caregiving remains dominated by females. This perpetuates norms about the capacity of men to care for themselves and for others. This also places a great burden on women, especially in light of the increased care burden created by HIV/AIDS. A commitment must be demonstrated to strengthening fathering and caregiving roles in Africa and supporting men in playing greater roles as caregivers in their families and communities.

We call on:

- Men and boys to take on caregiving roles in their families and communities
- Men and boys to build cultures of co-parenting and gender equitable childcare that value fatherhood.
- Governments to mandate maternal leave to mothers of at least 4-6 months and paternal leave for fathers of at least 1 month.
- Government Health Departments to ensure that women are able to be accompanied by their husband or partner to ante-natal care and to the delivery room, if they so choose.
- Government, schools, employers and civil society to promote men's potential as caregivers and remove barriers to men working in caregiving employment (especially primary schools and crèches).
- Civil society organisations to promote the role of men as carers in programming around HIV care.
- Donors to support further research and programming on fatherhood and caregiving issues.

Johannesburg Declaration and Call to Action

- Employers, trade unions and labour administrations to implement strategies that encourage father involvement and presence in their families. They should resist labour practices such as migrant labour that break up families and drive absent fatherhood.
- Media to portray positive images of men as fathers and caregivers.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY

International and regional human rights documents guarantee equal rights for all people, irrespective of their sexual orientation and identity. Despite this discrimination and violence against people due to their sexual orientation continues unabated in many countries in Africa. This situation is exacerbated by discriminatory laws that criminalise consensual same sex conduct. Such laws are a violation of the rights to non-discrimination, equality, privacy, assembly and freedom of association. Homophobic attitudes are related to concerns that homosexuality is inconsistent with and threatens traditional constructs of masculinity. We need to work towards promoting an understanding of masculinity that is more accepting of diversity.

We call on:

- Men and boys to respect sexual minorities and condemn violence against them.
- Governments to repeal discriminatory laws that criminalise same-sex relations and acts.
- Government to implement outreach activities to address public violence and hate crimes directed at sexual minorities.
- Governments and civil society organisations to mainstream sexual orientation programming and to ensure outreach activities to sexual minorities (including men who have sex with men) when implementing HIV programmes.
- Civil society organisations working around gender equality to actively engage with organisations and community groups focussing on sexual orientation.
- Donors to support the work of civil society organisations working to protect the rights of sexual minorities.
- Employers to respect sexual diversity in both their hiring and benefit packages.
- Media not to reinforce hate crimes and discriminating practices by highlighting slanderous and defamatory comments made by homophobic members of the community. We call on media to rather highlight and respect people's sexualities.

COLLABORATION WITH THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

Gender equality means full and equal sharing in the division of labour; full and equal access and control over assets, livelihood, and wealth; freedom from gender-based violence and women's control over their own bodies and lives.

The women's movement has tremendous experience in advocating for and working towards gender equality. Those working with men and boys should learn and build on this experience. Work with men and boys should always be done in solidarity with women's rights work and should not disempower women.

Work around changing gender norms requires that women and girls work hand in hand, and in equal partnership, with men and boys. There is a need for shared spaces between women and men, as well as a need for women and men only spaces. We recognise men as allies in efforts to advance women's rights, and men as subjects of rights themselves and as agents of change.

We call on:

Johannesburg Declaration and Call to Action

- Men and women to work together towards attaining gender equality, recognising the strength of combining resources and re-affirming their shared objectives.
- International organisations to promote collaboration between the women's movement and organisations engaging men and boys.
- Governments to bring a gendered analysis and rights-based approach to the development of laws and policies addressing gender-based violence and HIV.
- Governments to create spaces for civil society to participate in the development of laws and policies and to include the women's movement and those that work with men in that process.
- Civil society organisations to create spaces for dialogue and engagement between organisations that work with women and with men.
- Civil society organisations to create opportunities for:
 - The sharing of priorities between women's rights advocates and those working with men and boys
 - Consultation between women's rights advocates and organisations in work with men.
 - Transparency and accountability in the work with men and boys, as well as in women's rights work
 - Sharing of resources, opportunities and visions for change.
- Donors to ensure that resources for work with men and boys expands and complements, but does not detract from, resources for women's rights work.

PART 4: CONCLUSION

We, the delegates affirm that we will honour these commitments and hold our governments and regional organisations to account for them. We recognise that there are many existing opportunities available to support ongoing initiatives that address many of the concerns expressed in this declaration and will lend our collective efforts to the United Nations Secretary General's Unite to End Violence Against Women and Girls campaign, and to the 2010 United Nations Commission on the Status of Women's session reviewing progress made against commitments in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action.

We affirm our commitment to engage with governments, UN agencies, regional policy bodies and policy platforms such as the African Union, the East African Community, the Economic Community of West African States, the Southern African Development Community, the Commonwealth Foundation and the Commonwealth Secretariat and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region to support them to develop policies and programmes aimed at engaging men and boys for gender transformation. Specifically, we will carry out policy scans to identify policy gaps and opportunities and attempt to convene meetings with regional bodies within the next 12 months. Such consultations will also call for an African Union Expert Group Meeting on work with men and boys on transforming gender norms to produce a policy protocol on work with men and boys.

We call on individual men and women, youth, media, civil society, donors, private sector, governments and UN agencies to support the MenEngage Alliance and reaffirm their commitment to preventing gender-based violence and HIV by committing to working with men and boys in the various ways outlined in this document.