



MenEngage Alliance South Asia
working with men and boys for gender equality

DRAFT: Strategic Note MenEngage Alliance South Asia (MEASA) 2019 – 2022

1. Introduction:

The MenEngage Alliance South Asia (MEASA) is a regional network, part of the global MenEngage Alliance consisting of dozens of country networks spread across many regions of the world, hundreds of non-governmental organizations, as well as UN partners.

Its members work collectively and individually toward advancing gender justice, human rights and social justice to achieve a world in which all can enjoy healthy, fulfilling and equitable relationships and their full potential. Through its country-level and regional network, MenEngage seeks to provide and create space for a collective voice on the need to engage men and boys in gender equality, to build and improve the field of practice around engaging men in achieving gender justice, and advocating before policymakers at the local, national and regional levels.

The primary focus of the MenEngage Alliance South Asia (MEASA) is strengthening the Alliance and promoting knowledge sharing, capacity development, and collaboration among the organisations both at the regional and national levels. There have been stronger collaborations between national and regional organisations and agencies, such as IPPF-South Asia Regional office and its associates at the country-level, Partners for Prevention, Care International in Sri Lanka and Nepal, and USAID & GTZ in Nepal. MenEngage Alliance South Asia has a strong partnership with various women's rights organizations, both as members and partners, at both national and regional levels¹.

The MEASA governance framework comprises of a two-tiered regional governance structure with a Steering Committee and a smaller Executive Working group. The Steering Committee comprises of three representatives from each country network (four at present) as decided by the country alliance in respective countries, a representative from the global steering committee and a representative from the regional secretariat.

With the view to have collective efforts to address the structural barriers of gender equality, MenEngage Alliance South Asia and its members have been, since its inception in 2007, continuously working collectively and individually towards addressing these concerns primarily with its value

¹ South Asia, MenEngage Alliance Web page; <http://menengage.org/regions/asia/>



addition to “transforming masculinities and engaging boys and men in gender equality and women’s rights”.

MenEngage Alliance South Asia has more than 250 CSOs and individuals as members, hence has the potential to bring about the social change. And since 2011, MenEngage Alliance South Asia has been organizing regular steering committee meetings, as a result of which the regional network has set up democratic processes and structures to organize the regional network. The regional Steering Committee met in 2015 in Colombo, Sri Lanka and recently in May 2017, MenEngage Alliance South Asia organized a smaller group face-to-face meeting where the group came together to identify strategic ways forward for the regional network. The deliberations have been finalized in Dhulikhel Nepal in December 2018.

MEASA’s work remains responsive to regional and national realities, rooted in local wisdom, receptive to global best practices and in harmony with MenEngage Alliance’s Global Symposia Calls for Action, consensus built for action in previous MEASA meetings, treaty body recommendations, UN initiatives including UN OHCHR’s² recommendations on engaging men and boys for ending gender inequality and gender-based violence.

² “Engaging men and boys is a critical element of strategies to dismantle patriarchy in order to achieve gender equality and eliminate gender-based violence against women and girls. Clearly, the transformation of beliefs, attitudes and behaviours of men and boys is necessary to achieve these goals. In order to be transformative, interventions that focus on men and boys must challenge unequal power relations and structures, based on the recognition of how patriarchy is privileging men and boys and oppressing women and girls. In the absence of these premises, there is a risk that initiatives to engage men and boys may preserve and reinforce gender inequality and patriarchal and discriminatory gender stereotypes. In the same vein, interventions focused on men and boys should be designed in consultation with women’s rights advocates to make sure their concerns and perspectives are considered” –

UN OHCHR; Report of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on engaging men and boys in engaging men and boys in promoting and achieving gender equality, in the context of eliminating violence against women;<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/WRGS/Pages/EngagingMenBoysPromotingAchievingGenderEquality.aspx>



Globally, the MenEngage Alliance interventions are anchored in the following core-principles³:

1. **Gender as relational:** *We believe that men, along with women, should be engaged in achieving gender equality and in advancing the rights, health and well-being of women and girls.*
2. **Questioning men's violence against women:** *We are dedicated to engaging men and boys to end violence against women and to questioning or challenging violent versions of manhood.*
3. **Promoting existing UN mandates:** *We are dedicated to engaging men and boys to fulfill the mandates, statements of action, and principles of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Commission on the Status of Women statements (48th session), and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and working collectively to encourage governments to do the same.*
4. **Engaging men as caregivers:** *We are dedicated to promoting more equitable participation by men and boys in caregiving, the care of children and domestic tasks.*
5. **Working as allies with existing women's rights organizations:** *We are committed to working as allies with women and women's rights organizations to achieve equality for women and girls.*
6. **Sexual diversity and sexual rights:** *We are dedicated to promoting cultures of masculinity that respect sexual diversity and the sexual and reproductive rights of all, and that engage men so that concerns for reproductive health and contraception are more evenly shared between men and women.*
7. **The vulnerabilities of men:** *We believe that the specific needs and experiences of men and boys have often not been well understood nor taken into account in the development of public policy or professional practice across a wide range of areas. We believe that men and boys are made vulnerable by non-equitable and violent versions of manhood.*
8. **Engaging men from a positive perspective:** *We believe that all people would benefit from recognition of these issues and appropriate action to transform non-equitable and violent versions of manhood and redress power inequalities related to gender. We seek to build examples of men already acting in more gender-equitable and non-violent ways.*
9. **Participation:** *We will strive to include and take into account the voices of men and women, boys and girls, at the community level, and the voices of community-level NGOs.*
10. **Non-discrimination:** *We will actively advocate against, question and seek to overcome, sexism, social exclusion, homophobia, racism or any form of discriminatory behavior against women or gay/bisexual/transgender men and women, or on any other basis.*
11. **Transparency:** *We will be transparent, honest, fair and ethical in all of our actions, including making public our sources of funding and annual budget.*
12. **Collaboration:** *We seek to work in collaboration, with open dialogue about institutional differences and achieving consensus whenever possible.*
13. **Evidence base:** *We seek to build on evidence-based approaches to engaging men and boys.*
14. **Human rights perspective and life cycle approach:** *We recognize the need to apply a human rights perspective in all activities and to take into account a lifecycle and ecological approach that incorporates both the individual as well as the broader social and structural contexts that shape gender inequalities.*
15. **Code of Conduct:** *MenEngage designed a Code of Conduct to be used as a guiding document for our regions. This instrument is meant to be used to help members remain consistent with the values and principles of the Alliance, both in their personal lives and in our professional and public work. It has been signed by all of our steering committee members*

³ Para la versión en español, haga clic aquí; Our Core Principles; <http://menengage.org/about-us/our-core-principles/>



2. Context:

Gender inequality and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) are pervasive and enduring challenges that impede access to social and legal justice, threaten community cohesion, perpetuate multi-dimensional poverty and blight countless lives across the world and in South Asia.

The Asia Foundation's recent report, "The State of Conflict and Violence in Asia⁴," finds that gender-based violence is one of the deadliest forms of violence in the region. It often kills more people than armed conflict and other forms of escalated violence that typically receive more attention from policymakers and development actors. For example, between 2011 and 2015, India recorded over 40,000 dowry-related deaths. This is over 10 times more than the combined conflict related across the country during the same period of time, all genders combined. And dowry-related deaths are only one of many deadly forms of gender-based violence in India. In Nepal and Bangladesh, recent data from violence monitoring projects supported by The Asia Foundation indicates that gender-based violence is the first or second cause of intentional homicides in these countries, well ahead of political or ethno-communal violence.

According to the report, violence against women (VAW) is prevalent in Pakistan, due to patriarchal social norms and values coupled with customary and religious practices. Crimes targeting women, such as abduction, murder, and rape, are among the most common. According to the Aurat Foundation, a women's rights organization based in Islamabad, while rates of most crimes ebb and flow, rape and gang rape are significantly increasing.

The report also highlights that domestic and gender-based violence remain prevalent in Sri Lanka. The Sri Lanka Police recorded over 33,000 cases of violence against women and children between in the past ten years. Incidents of rape and incest recorded by the police have increased by 40 percent in the last ten years, from 1,463 cases in 2006 to 2,036 in 2016, the report says. The report also underpins stigma and shame associated with victims/survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, preventing them from reporting the crimes.

Women facing sexual violence across the region are less likely to report to the police due to stigma and fear of reprisal from perpetrators, across the South Asian region, the report asserts. Gender-based violence against women and girls remains a multi-dimensional phenomenon that is deeply rooted in inequitable societal norms, and may persist throughout the life cycle, case studies in the Asia Foundation report suggest. Excess child mortality rates and a deep-rooted bias against girls often begins in the womb. One of the most egregious forms of violence against girls is child marriage. South Asia sees the highest rates of child marriage⁵ which is in turn according to the evidence is associated with gendered lower education outcomes, inferior employment opportunities, and higher rates of domestic violence.

Though countries across South Asia have pro-women laws; including those against sexual harassment-which may occur in or outside of the workplace, in public and private spaces-the laws vary in scope and coverage – effective implementation and expeditious legal/social protection follow ups, however, remain a challenge and erratic, at best.

In the past decades there has been a growing consensus, globally, on the role boys and men should play in addressing gender inequality and gender-based violence. In order to realize the normative

⁴ <https://asiafoundation.org/publication/state-conflict-violence-asia/>

⁵ With approximately 1 in 2 girls married off before the age of 18, South Asia has the highest prevalence of child marriage in the world. Bangladesh has the highest rate of child marriage in the region (59%), followed by Nepal (37%) and Afghanistan (35%) and India (27%); <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/region/south-asia/>



framework established within CEDAW's mandates, the SDG's and other human rights treaties and international human rights and development frameworks, there is a worldwide call to work with men and boys. In the past two decades, governments, UN agencies, non-governmental and civil society organizations in global norm-setting and policy-making spaces have shown considerable recognition of the need to engage men and boys in women's rights and gender equality and have increasingly included engagement of men and boys in their policies.

From the 1994 ICPD Programme of Action to Secretary General Ban-Ki Moon's statement at the 1stGlobal Symposium on Engaging Men and Boys 2009 at Rio, the 2nd MenEngage Global Symposium, held in New Delhi in November 2014⁶, UNOHCHR Recommendations and CEDAW Recommendations, a great deal of support for work with men and boys has been expressed within the United Nations system and amongst its partners. UNFPA⁷ evidence demonstrates that, working with men and boys at policy and institutional levels offers great opportunity of addressing institutional gender inequality and enhances the scope and impact of initiatives aimed at ending violence against women.

Historically across the world and in the South Asian region patriarchy and toxic forms of masculinities have been demonstrated in normalizing of male gender privilege and power in their relations with women and girls. Equally, it is true that they may also have widely differing experiences of power and oppression as a result of other forms of inequality and social exclusions. Therefore, to understand more fully how men view themselves, their gender roles, their sexual relationships and their childbearing decisions, there is a need to collect richer information through surveys, especially because one problem in data collection where men and boys are concerned is that demographers tend to collect data from husbands, not men in general. This information is crucial in allowing men to actively reflect on the messages and expectations that they have received from society about manhood and gender norms.

4. Outcomes for MEASA Strategic Note 2019 - 2022:

South Asia Regional Strategic Vision, Mission, Goal and Key Priority Areas (2019 – 2022)

Vision

A world where all people are equal and free from discrimination and in which gender justice and human rights are promoted, protected and respected.

Mission

Ensuring engagement of boys and men to achieve a gender just society in South Asia

Goal

To strengthen the South Asian processes towards engaging men and boys for gender justice.

⁶ MEN AND BOYS FOR GENDER JUSTICE: DELHI DECLARATION AND CALL TO ACTION; http://menengage.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Delhi-Declaration-and-Call-to-Action_English_final.pdf

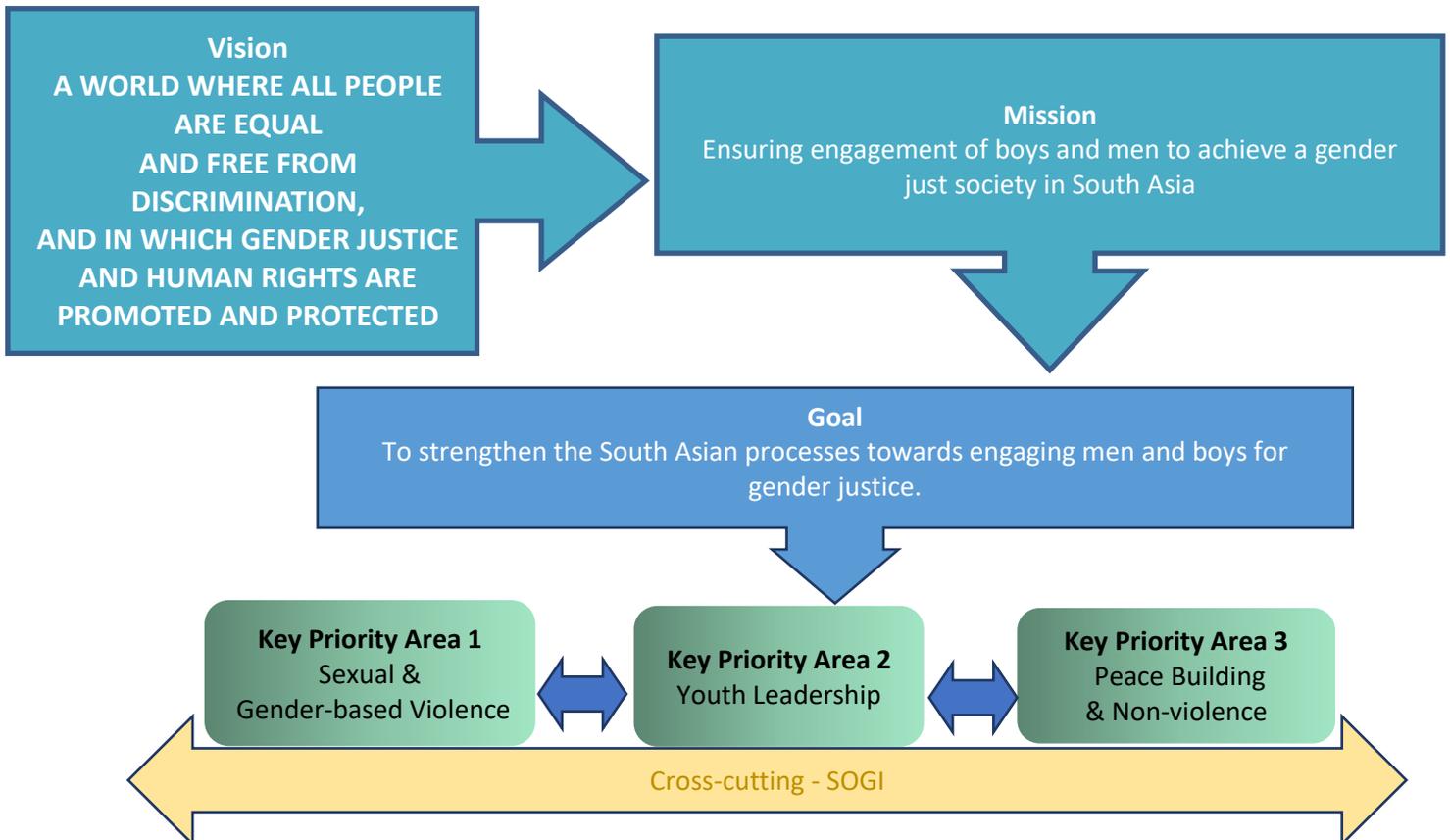
⁷ https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/UNFPA%20Engaging%20men%20and%20boys_web-2.pdf



Key Priority Areas:

- 1. Sexual & Gender-based Violence**
- 2. Youth Leadership**
- 3. Peace Building & Non-violence**

Cross-cutting theme: Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity (SOGI)





5. MEASA Strategic Objectives 2019 - 2022

Objective 1: To ensure an inclusive, enabling Policy Environment to sustain and scale up towards transformative GE through engaging men and boys

This Means: Promoting the engagement of men in positions of authority as advocates to support the establishment of a legal and policy framework that guarantees gender equality, prohibits and eliminates discrimination and prevents and responds to all forms of gender-based violence in all spheres of life;

Engaging men who have influence within public institutions relevant to the prevention of and response to gender-based violence to address bias in such institutions and adopt gender-transformative approaches. This includes institutions in education, health, social protection, law enforcement and justice systems;

Mobilizing men and boys for gender equality and the elimination of gender-based violence at community and societal level, in partnership with women's rights movements.

Objective 2: To build an effective community of practices on men and masculinities, working in solidarity with the broader feminist movement

This Means: Engaging men and boys as agents for achieving gender equality and eliminating gender-based violence must be based on a critical analysis of the privileges they enjoy as a result of discriminatory power structures, and re-engage them as allies and partners of women's rights discourse; to support the human rights of women and girls and gender equality. In the process, the benefits for men and boys of such a transformation will also be realized, including more positive, non-violent, equal and inclusive gender relations based on full respect for the human rights and dignity of all.

Objective 3: To promote non-violent, equitable and inclusive notions and practices of manhood through a socio-ecological approach towards dismantling patriarchy

This Means: Engaging men and boys is a critical element of strategies to dismantle patriarchy in order to achieve gender equality and eliminate gender-based violence against women and girls. Clearly, the transformation of beliefs, attitudes and behaviours of men and boys is necessary to achieve these goals. In order to be transformative, interventions that focus on men and boys must challenge unequal power relations and structures, based on the recognition of how patriarchy is privileging men and boys and oppressing women and girls. In the absence of these premises, there is a risk that initiatives to engage men and boys may preserve and reinforce gender inequality and patriarchal and discriminatory gender stereotypes. In the same vein, interventions focused on men and boys should be designed in consultation with women's rights advocates to make sure their concerns and perspectives are considered.



<p>Objective 2: To build an effective community of practices on men and masculinities, working in solidarity with the broader feminist movement</p>	<p>Outcome 2.1: Policies, systems, strategies and practices are put in place by multiple stakeholders (CSOs, State, trade unions, corporate, media, academia, education institutions etc.) for ensuring men and boys to be actively involved in preventing SGBV, promoting gender equality, SRHR, youth leadership, women empowerment, re-distribution of gender power relations, shifting of gender roles and challenging gender norms</p>	<p>Indicator 2.1: Regional partners from South Asia are engaging:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. % of stakeholders (Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Youth groups, state, academia, educational institutions, trade unions, corporate, media) ii. Number of multiple stakeholders are adopting policies and code of conduct to promote gender justice iii. Number of regional groups/alliances at state level, trade level, educational level, sports level and CSO levels taking the issues of engaging men and boys for gender equality
<p>Objective 3: To promote non-violent, equitable and inclusive notions and practices of manhood through a socio-ecological approach towards dismantling patriarchy</p>	<p>Outcome 3.1: Non-violent behaviour is promoted by active engagement of men and boys at individual; family; community and institutional levels</p>	<p>Indicator 3.1.1: No. of men and young boys sensitised and challenging gender inequality in families, communities and institutions</p> <p>Indicator 3.1.2: No. of institutional policy reforms/changes</p>

6. Discussion Points on Premise and Strategies for Engaging Men & Boys:

1. Global commitments to engaging men and boys have not yet fully translated to national and local level policies, which generally continue to limit the understanding of “gender” as solely addressing the roles and responsibilities of women and girls. The majority of policies and programs thus lack nuanced analysis of the multiple roles of men and boys in gender-informed power inequalities and their roles and responsibilities in transforming them, missing valuable opportunities to transform the very patriarchal system that is at the basis of gender injustices.
2. Engaging men and boys as agents for achieving gender equality and eliminating gender-based violence must be based on a critical analysis of the privileges they enjoy as a result of discriminatory power structures, and re-engage them as allies and partners to support the human rights of women and girls and gender equality. In the process, the benefits for men and boys of such a transformation will also be realized, including more positive, non-violent, equal and inclusive gender relations based on full respect for the human rights and dignity of all.



3. Engaging men and boys in combating harmful practices through their roles as, among others, religious and traditional leaders, fathers, sons, family members, teachers, health professionals and members of the community;
4. Helping transform discriminatory gender norms and stereotypes and promoting non-violent, respectful and equal gender relations through education and communication, including through: gender-responsive early childhood education and development, the integration of gender equality content into curricula at all levels of education and scientifically based and age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education;
5. Promoting equal sharing of responsibilities in unpaid care and domestic work, including through parental leave policies and increased flexibility in working arrangements;
6. Promoting full respect for the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women, girls, men, boys and non-binary persons, emphasizing the importance of dismantling discriminatory stereotypes in this area and supporting behavioural change;
7. Adopting a life cycle and intergenerational approach, including through the rehabilitation of perpetrators of gender-based violence to prevent reoffending and support for men and boys who have witnessed and suffered from violence, in addition to support for women and girls who have been exposed to and experienced such violence;
8. Promoting the engagement of men in positions of authority and as advocates to support the establishment of a legal and policy framework that guarantees gender equality, prohibits and eliminates discrimination and prevents and responds to all forms of gender-based violence in all spheres of life;
9. Engaging men who have influence within public institutions relevant to the prevention of and response to gender-based violence to address bias in such institutions and adopt gender-transformative approaches. This includes institutions in education, health, social protection, law enforcement and justice systems;
10. Mobilizing men and boys for gender equality and the elimination of gender-based violence at community and societal level, in partnership with women's rights movements.
11. In their efforts to engage men and boys to promote and achieve gender equality and to eliminate gender-based violence against women, States, national human rights institutions, civil society organizations, United Nations entities and development partners should:
 - I. Invest in efforts that engage men, boys, women, girls and non-binary persons to challenge unequal power relations and to transform discriminatory gender stereotypes and social norms to promote non-violent, equal and inclusive relationships that are also inclusive of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons;
 - II. Build a strong evidence base for effective policy and programme design and ensure rigorous monitoring to assess the actual impact of interventions on the transformation of discriminatory gender norms and stereotypes, the promotion of gender equality and the prevention and reduction of gender-based violence against all women and girls;



- III. Pay due attention to the intersection of discrimination and discriminatory stereotypes based on gender and other grounds, such as race, economic and social status, sexual orientation and gender identity, disability, and cultural and religious background;
- IV. Ensure the active and meaningful participation of women and girls and effective collaboration with women's organizations and feminist groups in efforts to engage men and boys. Such participation should include policy and programme design, the delivery of programmes and services, as well as monitoring and evaluation;
- V. Combine efforts to engage men and boys with investment in ensuring an enabling environment for the work of women and girls human rights defenders, women's rights organizations and feminist groups;
- VI. Take a comprehensive, multilevel, multisectoral and multi-stakeholder approach to transform discriminatory gender norms and relations. This means that relevant efforts should be made at multiple levels, in the home, in the community, in local and national institutions and through legal and policy frameworks and coordinated across various sectors, including education, health, social protection, law enforcement and justice systems;
- VII. Provide financial, technical and human resources to the long-term efforts to engage men and boys in achieving gender equality and eliminating gender-based violence against women and girls, without diverting existing resources allocated to promote women's rights and support women's empowerment and leadership.



Annexure 1.

Glossary⁸

This glossary provides brief descriptions of how MenEngage Alliance understands and applies the key concepts informing our Vision and Mission. These understanding are at the core of our understanding of qualitative work on men and masculinities within women's rights and gender justice.

Transform and end patriarchy: We seek to engage men and boys, along with women, girls and people of diverse gender identities, to redress structural power imbalances and inequalities, male domination and their manifestations upheld by systemic male supremacy ideologies, and to reform such dualistic and sexist gender orders.

Transform masculinities: We seek to destabilize stereotypical male gender roles and hegemonic expressions of manhood, and support manifestations of non-violent, equitable and inclusive notions of manhood, by changing social norms that shape boys' and men's behaviour.

Engaging men and boys: We seek to work with men and boys to encourage their active involvement in ending gender inequalities, advancing women's rights and transforming masculinities as allies with women, girls and people of diverse gender identities. Recognizing that some men and boys question the harmful notions of manhood and the privileges that society grants them, we provide them with ways to take transformative action. We work with men in power in all spheres of society to promote progressive policies and institutional practices in favour of women's rights and gender justice.

Gender transformative: MenEngage seeks to support the increased uptake of gender transformative approaches with men and boys through the work of the Alliance.

Intersectionality: We acknowledge that oppressive institutions (racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, xenophobia, classism, etc.) are interconnected and cannot be examined separately from one another. This interplay of multiple identities can increase vulnerability and inequalities in privilege and power, and further entrench inequalities and injustice. We seek to contribute to an intersectional understanding of men and boys' roles and responsibilities, and enhance an intersectional perspective in the work of the Alliance and its members.

Feminist approach: We acknowledge that we build on the heritage of feminist women's rights organizations and movements and ground our work firmly in feminist principles. We seek to strengthen our work by embracing a women's rights perspective and feminist analysis, including placing inequalities in privilege and power that result from patriarchy at the heart of our work with men and boys. We commit to listening to and being accountable to women's rights voices; and to institutionalizing democratic and inclusive decision making processes within the Alliance.

Gender transformative approaches (GTA): Policies, processes and strategies that seek to critically reflect on and transform social norms and institutional practices that create and reinforce gender inequalities. GTA do not view the engagement of men and boys as an end in itself, rather as a means to transform social norms and gender power relations at their roots. GTA are part of a 'gender integration continuum' that classifies interventions as gender exploitative, gender neutral, gender

⁸ Source: MenEngage Global Alliance Strategic Plan 2017-2020



sensitive or enabling spaces for dialogue and joint action: MenEngage Alliance, being informed by a feminist approach, engage in strengthening partnerships, networks and alliances as a political act to change and a tool for empowerment within movement building. We work ‘glocal’: where ideas from the local to the global are jointly identified, shared, negotiated, changed, and disseminated.

Partnerships: We seek to foster concrete and equal associations and collaborations with various actors and agencies in the field of women’s rights, gender and social justice, climate justice, child rights, youth empowerment and rights, sexual and reproductive health rights, civil and political rights, indigenous population rights, human rights, among others.

Working as allies with women’s rights organizations: We are committed to working as allies, and to fostering healthy relationships, with women and women’s rights organizations, movements and networks to achieve equity and equality for women and girls, and justice for all, as a political act to strengthen the collective struggle for human rights and social, economic and environmental justice.