



**ENGAGING
MEN & BOYS**
IN ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY

rio declaration

Rio de Janeiro March 29 - April 3, 2009

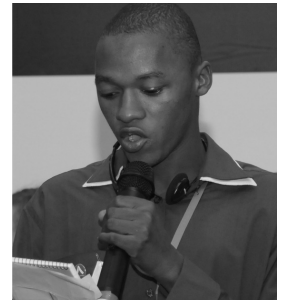
PART 1: INTRODUCTION

We come from eighty countries. We are men and women, young and old, representing the world's cultural and linguistic diversity, working side by side with respect and with the shared goals of social and gender justice. We are active in community organizations, faith-based and educational institutions; we are representatives of governments, NGOs and the United Nations.

What unites us is our outrage at the injustices that continue to plague the lives of women and girls, and the self-destructive demands we put on boys and men. But even more so, what brings us together is a powerful sense of hope, expectation, and the potential of men's and boys' capacity to change, to care, to cherish, to love passionately, and to work for social and gender justice. We know and affirm that men are capable of caring for their partners, themselves and their children.

We are outraged by the pandemic of violence women face at the hands of men, by the relegation of women to second class status, and the continued domination by specific groups of men of our economies, of our politics, of our social and cultural institutions. We know that among women and men there are those who fare even worse because of social class, religion, language, physical differences, ancestry and sexual orientation. We also know that many men are victims of violence at the hands of other men.

As we acknowledge the harm done to too many women and girls at the hands of men, we also recognize the costs to boys and men from the ways our societies have defined men's power and raised boys to be men. Too many young men and boys are sacrificed in wars and conflicts for those men of political, economic, and religious power who demand conquest and domination at any cost. Many men cause terrible harm to themselves because they deny their own needs for physical and mental care or lack health and social services.



Organizadores | Host Organizations



Apoio | Apoio | Support



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Too many men suffer because our male-dominated world is not only one of power men have over women, but of some groups of men over others. Too many men, like too many women, live in terrible poverty and degradation, and/or are forced to work in hazardous and inhumane conditions. Too many men carry deep scars of trying to live up to the impossible demands of manhood and find solace in risk-taking, violence, self-destruction or alcohol and drug use. Too many men are stigmatized and punished simply because they love, desire and have sex with other men.

In the face of these global realities, we affirm our commitment to end injustices for women and men, and boys and girls, and provide them with the means and opportunities to create a better world. We are here because we believe that men and women must work together in speaking out against discrimination and violence.

We also affirm that engaging men and boys to promote gender justice is possible and is already happening. NGOs, campaigns and increasingly governments are directly involving hundreds of thousands of men around the world. We hear men and boys joining women and girls in speaking out against violence, practicing safer sex, and supporting women's and girls' sexual and reproductive rights. We see men involved in caregiving and nurturing others, including those men who assume the daily challenges of looking after babies and children.

We also affirm that the work with men and boys stems from and honours the pioneering work and ongoing leadership of the women's movement. We stand in solidarity with the ongoing struggles for women's empowerment and rights. By working in collaboration with women's rights organizations, we aim to change individual men's attitudes and practices, and transform the imbalance of power between men and women in relationships, families, communities, institutions and nations. Furthermore, we acknowledge the importance of the women's movement for the possibilities offered to men to be more caring and just human beings.

For the past decade, the daily work of many of the 450 delegates to the First Global Symposium on Engaging Men and Boys in Achieving Gender Equality has been to engage boys and men to question violent and inequitable versions of manhood. This work does not promote a spirit of collective guilt nor collective blame. Instead we invite men and boys to embrace healthier and non-violent models of manhood and to take responsibility to work alongside girls and women to achieve gender justice.

We also appeal to parents, teachers, community leaders, coaches, the media and businesses, along with governments, NGOs, religious institutions, and the United Nations, to mobilize the political will and economic resources required to increase the scale and impact of work with men and boys to promote gender justice.

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The Evidence Base Exists

New initiatives and programs to engage men and boys in gender justice provide a growing body of evidence that confirms it is possible to change men's gender-related attitudes and practices. Effective programs and processes have led men and boys to stand up against violence and for gender justice in both their personal lives and their communities. These initiatives not only help deconstruct harmful masculinities, but reconstruct more gender-equitable ones. Global research makes it increasingly clear that working with men and boys can reduce violence against women and girls and between men; improve relationships; strengthen the work of the women's rights movement; improve health outcomes of women and men, girls and boys; and that it is possible to accelerate this change through deliberate program and policy-level interventions.

Resources

Resources allocated to achieving gender justice must be increased. We believe that the evidence is clear that investing in integrated program and policy approaches that transform underlying gender inequalities - and engage women, girls, boys and men - is effective. We urge governments to allocate increased funding for mitigating the harm caused to women and men by gender injustice, and to allocate increased resources to actions that transform gender inequalities that lead to such harmful outcomes. We acknowledge that engaging men and boys in activities that have traditionally focused on women and girls requires additional resources, not taking away resources that are already limited.



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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 justice. Policy makers have an obligation to act on these commitments to develop, implement, scale up and evaluate policy and programming approaches to working with men. These commitments provide civil society activists with leverage to demand rapid implementation.

These international commitments include:

- **The 1994 International Conference on Population and Development** affirmed the need to “promote gender equality in all spheres of life, including family and community life, and to encourage and enable men to take responsibility for their sexual and reproductive behaviour and their social and family roles.”¹
- **The Programme of Action of the World Summit on Social Development (1995)** and its review held in 2000 paid particular attention to men’s roles and responsibilities with regards to sharing family, household and employment responsibilities with women.²
- **The Beijing Platform for Action (1995)** restated the principle of shared responsibility; and affirmed that women’s concerns could only be addressed “in partnership with men”.³
- **The Twenty-sixth Special Session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS (2001)** recognized the need to challenge gender stereotypes and attitudes and gender inequalities in relation to HIV/AIDS through the active involvement of men and boys.⁴
- **The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), at its 48th Session in 2004 [and the session in 2008],** adopted conclusions calling on Governments, entities of the United Nations system and other stakeholders to: encourage the active involvement of men and boys in eliminating gender stereotypes; encourage men to participate in preventing and treating HIV/AIDS; implement programs to enable men to adopt safe and responsible sexual practices; support men and boys to prevent gender-based violence; implement programs in schools to accelerate gender equality; and promote reconciliation of work and family responsibilities.

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 time has come for us to fulfill these existing global commitments.**

¹ See paragraphs 4.11, 4.24, 4.25, 4.26, 4.27, 4.28, 4.29, 5.4, 7.8, 7.37, 7.41, 8.22, 11.16, 12.10, 12.13 and 12.14 of the Cairo Programme of Action, and paragraphs 47, 50, 52, and 62 of the outcome of the twenty-first special session of the General Assembly on Population and Development.

² See paragraphs 7, 47 and 56 of the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development, and paragraphs 15, 49, 56 and 80 of the outcome of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly on Further Initiatives for Social Development.

³ See paragraphs 1, 3, 40, 72, 83b, 107c, 108e, 120 and 179 of the Beijing Platform for Action.

⁴ See paragraph 47 of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS: “Global Crisis - Global Action”.

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PART 2: SPECIFIC THEMES AND AREAS OF ACTION

Furthermore, we call for action on the following dimensions of working with men and boys to achieve gender justice:

■ Violence against Women

Women and girls suffer from a pandemic of violence at the hands of some men: physical violence by husbands and male partners, sexual assault (including rape in the context of marriage), trafficking of women and girls, femicide, rape as a weapon of war, sexual harassment at work, and genital mutilation. For too long, all forms of violence (including physical, psychological and sexual violence) against women and girls have been seen primarily as a “women’s issue” and have been invisible, regarded as a private matter and been the concern of the women’s movement. Patriarchal structures sustain this impunity. Men’s and boys’ accountability and engagement for social transformation is essential to ensure violence-free lives for women and girls.

■ Violence against Children

Girls and boys suffer from large-scale abuse and violence (including corporal and other forms of humiliating and degrading punishment) in the home, community, school and institutions that are charged with protecting them. This violence often follows gendered patterns; in some contexts boys are more likely to suffer physical violence from parents while girls are more likely to suffer emotional and sexual violence. Witnessing and suffering violence as children is one of the factors that leads boys and men to repeat violence against intimate partners later in life. This implies the need for a life cycle approach to reducing violence and to engaging with boys, and girls, to break cycles of family violence.

■ Violence Among Men and Boys

Although violence against women is a priority in our agenda, we also must address different forms of violence among men and boys. These include armed conflict, gang violence, school bullying and homophobia-related violence. Men and boys face higher homicide rates than women and girls worldwide. These deaths - the vast majority gun-related - are highly preventable and are also directly linked to boys’ socialization around risk-taking, fighting and the dominance of some groups of men and boys over others. Questioning cultures of violence and gun cultures requires engaging men and boys with an understanding of how salient versions of manhood are too often defined in relation to violence.

■ Violence in Armed Conflict

In countries that practice sex-specific conscription or demand longer military service from men than women, young men are treated as socially expendable and sent to their deaths in large numbers. Militaries that refuse to enforce international laws on the treatment of civilians in conflict explicitly condone and sometimes encourage the use of sexual violence as a method of warfare, explicitly privileging militarized models of masculinity and ensuring that those men who do refuse violence are belittled and subject to stigma including homophobic violence. Girls and boys are increasingly drawn into armed conflict, both as victims and perpetrators. We call on national governments, to uphold Security Council Resolutions including 1308, 1325, 1612 and 1820 and to proactively contribute to the elimination of all forms of gendered violence, including in times of armed conflict.

■ Gender and the Global Political Economy

Gender identities are strongly influenced by current trends in the global political economy. The values of competition, consumption, aggressive accumulation and assertion of power reinforce practices of domination and violence. The dominant economic models have led to increasing economic vulnerability as livelihood opportunities have been lost on a large scale. While women have entered the workforce outside the home in large numbers in the past 20 years, men are still primarily defined by being breadwinners and providers. Many men who are not able to live up to this social expectation to be providers experience stress and mental health issues, including substance and alcohol use. Economic stress is also associated with men’s use of violence against women and children. We need a better understanding of these phenomena, and we need to advocate for the inclusion of these issues in international economic forum.

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■ Paternidade

Across the world gender norms reinforce the expectation that women and girls have to take responsibility for care work, including domestic tasks, raising children and taking care of the sick and the elderly. This frequently prevents women and girls from accessing their fundamental human rights to health, education, employment and full political participation. Correcting this requires that National Governments, civil society organisations, UN agencies and donor organisations put in place strategies that shift gender norms and encourage men to share the joys and burdens of caring for others with women, including in their capacity as fathers and providers of child care. It will also require significant investments in public sector services to reduce the total care burden, especially in the context of HIV and AIDS and other chronic diseases.

■ Sexual and Gender Diversities and Sexual Rights

There are tremendous diversities among men and boys in their sexual and gender identities and relations. Too many men are stigmatized for the fact that they love, desire and/or enjoy sex with men, and those that have non-normative gender identities. Formal and informal patterns of sexual injustice, discrimination, social exclusion and oppression throughout the world shape men's and boys' access to civil rights, health care, personal safety, and the recognition and affirmation of their intimate relations. Constructions of masculinity in many contexts are based on hostility toward sexual behaviours that contradict dominant patriarchal norms, and are policed through heterosexist violence. Programming and policy engaging men and boys must recognize and affirm sexual diversity among men and boys, and support the positive rights of men of all sexualities to sexual pleasure and well-being.

■ Men's and Boys' Gender Related Vulnerabilities and Health Needs

In most of the world, men and boys die earlier than women and girls from preventable diseases, accidents and violence. Most men have higher death rates from the same illnesses that affect women. We need to work with boys and young men to promote health-seeking and help-seeking behaviours for themselves and their families. Additionally, the emotional and personal experiences of men and boys have to be addressed to better understand the root problems of violence, suicide, substance use, accidents and limited health-seeking behaviour. Gender-responsive and socio-culturally sensitive mental health programs and services are needed to address and prevent these issues at the community level, working to achieve gender-appropriate health services and promotion for women, girls, men and boys.

■ Sexual Exploitation

Men's use of sexual violence results from social norms that condone the exploitation of women and girls, boys and men. The objectification and commoditisation of women and girls and boys and men normalizes violent and coercive sexual behaviours. Ending sexual violence and exploitation requires holistic strategies from the global to local level to engage men and boys in challenging attitudes that give men dominance, and treating all human beings with dignity and respect. We must also include in this discussion the use of the Internet in sexual exploitation and explore ways that men and boys can be engaged in questioning this new form of exploitation.

■ Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) are largely considered a women's domain, leaving women and girls responsible for their own sexual health. Men often do not have access to sexual and reproductive health services, do not use such services and/or behave in ways that put themselves and their partners at risk. It is essential that we work with men and boys to fully support and promote the SRHR of women, girls, boys and other men, and that health services address issues of power and proactively promote gender justice. Such services should help men to identify and address their own sexual and reproductive health needs and rights. This requires us to advance sexual rights, and to adopt positive, human-rights based approach to sexuality.

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■ HIV and AIDS

HIV and AIDS continue to devastate communities across the world. Gender inequalities and rigid gender roles exacerbate the spread and the impact of the epidemic, making it difficult for women and girls to negotiate sexual relations and leaving women and girls with the burden of caring for those with AIDS-related illnesses. Definitions of masculinity that equate manhood with dominance over sexual partners, the pursuit of multiple partners and a willingness to take risks while simultaneously depicting health-seeking behaviour as a sign of weakness, increase the likelihood that men will contract and pass on the virus. In line with commitments made at UN General Assembly Special Sessions on HIV and AIDS and in many national AIDS plans, governments, UN agencies and civil society must take urgent action to implement evidence-based prevention, treatment, care and support strategies that address the gendered dimensions of HIV and AIDS, meet the needs of people living with HIV and AIDS, ensure access to treatment, challenge stigma and discrimination and support men to reduce their risk taking behaviours and improve their access to and use of HIV services.

■ Youth and the Education Sector

The young men and women who participated in the Symposium affirm that early and active involvement in programs that promote gender equitable behaviour at all levels will systematically create an environment where girls and boys are viewed as equals, will promote their awareness of their rights as human beings and instil the capacity to realize these rights in every aspect of their lives, from access to education to the prevention of early marriage, the right to dignified labour, the right to live in equitable relationships and the right to live lives free from violence. Gender justice issues must be included in the school curricula from the earliest ages with a focus on promoting a critical reflection about gender norms.

■ Recognition of Diversity

We stress that debate, action and policies on gender relations and gender inequities will be more effective and have more impact when they include an understanding and celebration of differences based on race, ethnicity, age, sexual and gender diversities, religion, physical ability and class.

■ Environment

One foundation of male-dominated societies has been the attempt by some men to dominate nature. With catastrophic climate change and environmental degradation, these actions have had disastrous outcomes. Our goal goes beyond gender justice to say that a world made in the image of violent, careless men is self-destructive. All levels of our societies must urgently act to stop this most dramatic expression of unjust social and economic power.

■ Strengthening the Evidence Base

It is vital to continue to build the evidence base for gender transformative programs through research and program evaluation, to determine which strategies are most successful in different cultural contexts. Indicators of success should include a specific examination of whether gender norms and behaviours have changed. Furthermore, program and policy evaluation should examine the effects of gender-focused programs and policies on both men and women.

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PART 3: THE CALL TO ACTION

1. Individuals should take forward this call to action within their communities and be agents of change to promote gender justice. Individuals and groups need to hold and keep their governments and leaders accountable.
2. Community based organizations should continue their groundbreaking work to challenge the status quo of gender and other inequalities and actively model social change.
3. Non-governmental organizations, including faith-based organizations, should develop and build on programs, interventions and services that are based on the needs, rights and aspirations of their communities, are accountable and reflect the principles in this document. They should develop synergies with other relevant social movements, and establish mechanisms for monitoring and reporting on government commitments.
4. International non-governmental organizations working in the field of gender based violence, gender equity or issues of violence against boys and girls should engage boys and men together with women and girls; should support involved national organizations through facilitating networks, providing capacity building, technical support and should collaborate with governments to develop policies and strategies that promote gender equity and non-violent behaviours for proper implementation and follow-up of international and UN commitments.
5. Governments should act on their existing international and UN obligations and commitments, prioritize and allocate resources to gender transformative interventions, and develop policies, frameworks and concrete implementation plans that advance this agenda, including through working with other governments and adherence to the Paris Principles.
6. The private sector should promote workplaces that are gender-equitable and free from violence and exploitation, and direct corporate social responsibility towards inclusive social change.
7. The role of media and entertainment industries in maintaining and reinforcing traditional and inequitable gender norms has to be addressed and confronted and alternatives must be supported.
8. Bilateral donors should redirect their resources towards the promotion of inclusive programming for gender justice and inclusive social justice, including changes to laws and policies, and develop synergies amongst donors.
9. The United Nations must show leadership in these areas, innovatively and proactively supporting member states to promote gender equitable and socially transformative law, policy and program development, including through interagency coordination as articulated in the One UN approach.
10. We, gathered at the Symposium, pledge to answer the call of the Secretary-General's Campaign UNite to End Violence against Women 2008-2015, to galvanize our energies, networks and partnerships in support of world mobilization of men and boys, and their communities, to stop and prevent this pandemic.

We call on governments, the UN, NGOs, individuals and the private sector to devote increased commitment and resources to engaging men and boys in questioning and overcoming inequitable and violent versions of masculinities and to recognize the positive role of men and boys - and their own personal stake - in overcoming gender injustices.