



**Commission on the Status of Women
Fifty-ninth session**

The responsibility of men and boys in achieving gender equality

**Monday, 16 March 2015
10.00 am to 1.00 pm**

ISSUES PAPER

1. Introduction

In its resolution 2013/18, the Economic and Social Council decided that at its fifty-ninth session, in 2015, the Commission of the Status of Women (CSW) will undertake a review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, including current challenges that affect the implementation of the Platform for Action and the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women, as well as opportunities for strengthening gender equality and the empowerment of women in the post-2015 development agenda through the integration of a gender perspective.

As part of the review and appraisal at its fifty-ninth session, the Commission will hold a conversation on the responsibility of men and boys in achieving gender equality to assess how far the global agenda has advanced since 1995, in terms of working with men as partners, advocates, and stakeholders in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. It will build on the MenEngage Global Symposium on Men and Boys for Gender Justice, held in November 2014 in India, and discuss how to move forward efforts that actively engage men and boys in challenging power dynamics in their own lives as well as in their communities, societies and institutions, and thus contribute to the understanding of men's responsibilities to achieving gender equality. It will provide examples of policies and programmes that have been implemented to include men in a shared vision of gender equality and to transform prevalent notions of masculinities. It will discuss the results and the remaining challenges, and address key policy and strategy recommendations for moving forward.

The event will result in a Chair's summary that should contribute to the accelerated implementation of the Platform for Action.

2. Elements for discussion

A. Background

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action emphasized the principle of shared power and responsibility among women and men at home and in the workplace as a critical aspect of achieving gender equality. The engagement of men and boys has also been identified by the Commission on the

Status of Women (including in 2004 and 2009) as essential to gender equality and women's empowerment. Beyond just the nominal or symbolic involvement of men, the Beijing Platform for Action envisions male engagement as a necessary means to challenge the structures, beliefs, practices, and institutions that sustain men's aggregate privileges, as well as to address inequalities between women and men.

Much has been achieved since Beijing 1995. In many parts of the world, the opportunities of women and girls have expanded significantly. Globally, girls are now as likely as boys to be enrolled in primary education and significant progress has been made at the secondary and tertiary level as well. Women's voice and influence in political decision-making has increased, be it as heads of state, members of parliament, or local representatives. There has been an unprecedented level of legislative change to address violence against women.

But much remains to be done, as outlined in the report of the Secretary-General on the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (E/CN.6/2015/3). Deep seated discriminatory norms, stereotypes, prejudice and violence remain pervasive and persistent, thus holding back women and girls from realizing their rights.

As gender inequalities are defined by controlling forms of power, achieving gender equality and women's empowerment requires to promote and enact alternative and shared forms of power, utilizing individual and collective strengths to work towards common goals without coercion or domination. This transformation of power relations entails reframing the discourse as relations among men and women to be more equal in power. In such a reframed discourse, providing, care giving, community roles, responsibility, leadership, become shared endeavours towards a common idea of citizenship that ultimately benefits all.

While there is increasingly widespread agreement that working with men and boys is a necessary part of achieving gender equality, there are also some continuing concerns regarding existing strategies and goals. There are still divergent understandings of the nature and extent of men's and boys' roles in regard to the gender equality agenda. While interrogating men's roles as gatekeepers and framing their roles as partners reflect important dynamics and principles related to engaging men and boys, they do not fully capture their role or stake in gender equality. To achieve gender equality requires simultaneously engaging men to be actively committed to redistributing power in both their personal lives and in the larger societal sphere. In addition to broader ethical and social gains, men as individuals benefit from greater equality in the form of improved and healthier relationships with the women and girls in their lives, and more options in terms of their own experiences, behaviours and choices.

Since the Fourth World Conference on Women organizations and initiatives that work with men as active participants and beneficiaries of gender equality have emerged in diverse areas, from the prevention of violence against women to the promotion of labour and trade union rights. However, twenty years after Beijing, while the women's movement must continue to lead the movement for gender equality, men's responsibility and accountability in challenging the structures, beliefs, practices and institutions that sustain their own privileges and inequitable norms, has become an urgency.

Engaging men and boys in gender equality must be an imperative of the post-2015 development agenda, and to enhancing the momentum for addressing gender inequalities, strengthening enjoyment of human rights, and promoting women's empowerment. Accelerating change requires engagement, responsibility and accountability at individual level, and beyond that in communities, societies, and institutions.

B. Questions for discussion during the dialogue

- How far has the global agenda evolved since the Fourth World Conference on Women, in terms of working with men as partners, advocates, and stakeholders in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment?
- What are the linkages between gender equality, masculinities, and power? How do social and cultural norms about masculinities shape power relations and gender inequalities?
 - How do gender norms affect both women and men?
 - How should we understand men's responsibilities and potential contributions to the gender equality agenda?
- What policies and programmes have been implemented to include men in a shared vision of gender equality and to transform prevalent notions of masculinities? What has been the result? What are the remaining challenges?
 - How do we reach out to boys from early childhood to adolescents and promote alternative role models to promote a new generation of men with more positive behaviours towards women?
 - How have we engaged boys and men in the prevention of violence against women and girls?
 - How do we engage men as fathers and caregivers and in taking equal responsibility along with women for household, domestic and care work that is for the most part, unpaid?
- What are key policy and strategy recommendations for moving forward? How do we push forward with institutional and governmental policies that address the social and structural determinants of gender inequalities and how do we implement them?
 - How do we embed the engagement of men and boys for gender equality in the post-2015 development agenda and Sustainable Development Goals?
 - How do we develop, implement, and monitor policies that reflect and incorporate a shared vision and responsibility of gender equality and build state capacity to implement them?

3. Format

The panel will be chaired by H.E. Mr. Ruben Zamora, Vice-Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women (El Salvador). A moderator will facilitate the interactive discussion. The panelists will give 5 minute opening presentations and take part in a moderated discussion (30 minutes). This will be followed by short targeted comments from a group of respondents (5 minutes each), and an interactive discussion with representatives from Member States, entities of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations.