



Submission on COVID-19 and the increase of domestic violence against women To the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences

MenEngage Alliance¹ would like to thank the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Ms. Dubravka Šimonović, for the opportunity to submit inputs on the increase in gender-based violence against women and domestic violence in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. We would like to take this opportunity to provide our submission on the issues raised in **Question 10**, by sharing “examples of good practices to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence and to combat other gendered impacts of the COVID-19”, as well as ongoing challenges in carrying out these efforts from a men and masculinities lens.

Patriarchy, Masculinities & COVID-19

Violence against women and girls is one of the most widespread human rights violations of our time, with records showing that ‘**243 million women and girls** have been subjected to sexual and /or physical violence perpetrated by an intimate partner in the previous 12 months’.² Since governments began implementing lockdowns and ‘shelter at home’ orders, there has been a sharp increase in registered cases of violence against women and girls throughout the world: 30% in **France**; 25% in **Argentina**; 30% in **Cyprus**; 33% in **Singapore**, with similar trends were recorded in **Canada, Germany, Spain, the U.S. and the U.K, India, Mexico, and Brazil**, while noting that historically **approximately 40% of VAWG cases continue to go unreported**.³ COVID-19 has deeply exposed the fault lines in our society, bringing to the fore the critical need to address this ‘shadow pandemic’ within the pandemic.

Historically, triggers of IPV by male partners have included jealousy, fear of losing their partner, fear of peers/community perceptions about “who’s in charge”, or fear of appearing emasculated. The narrative about COVID-19 and VAW/IPV/DV has often centered around men’s frustration, inability to provide for the family, and couples’ tensions around bills, food, money, and livelihood. **However, the root causes run deeper, and include social, cultural, political and economic power inequalities born out of patriarchy and supported by traditional notions of masculinity.** In addition, these root causes point to links between masculinities and gender-based violence and other forms of violence that are exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic, including violence on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity and violence against other marginalized groups.

¹ MenEngage Alliance is a global network of over 700 CSOs, (I)NGOs, research institutes and activists working to transform masculinities and engage men and boys in women’s rights and gender justice for all. Many of these MenEngage Alliance members self-identify as women’s rights organizations. One of the core issues MenEngage Alliance members work on is the elimination of all forms of violence against women, girls, and people of all gender identities. Accountability to and partnerships with women’s rights movements and to other historically-oppressed social groups, is critical in MenEngage Alliance’s work. www.menengage.org

² UN Women Report: The Shadow Pandemic - Rise of Violence against women and girls and COVID-19: <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/issue-brief-covid-19-and-ending-violence-against-women-and-girls-en.pdf?la=en&vs=5006>

³ Ibid

In tandem with the rise of VAW/IPV/DV, some governments are responding and managing the emerging crisis through patriarchal and militaristic means, implementing measures which are exclusionary of the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized, especially women, girls and LGBTQIA+ individuals, as well as using the pandemic to politicize longstanding fractures in the support of SRHR for all, access to abortion services and other critical services such as those carried out by women's shelters and service providers. Patriarchy, together with militarism and capitalism, as such, are not just an assault on women and girls at an individual level, but are also forces of power and control in the systemic dimensions as they structurally oppress, marginalize and exclude them.

Additionally, we see governments seeking to financially support traditionally masculine-led sectors and structures through bailouts for transportation, construction and finance at the expense of providing stimulus packages which ensure protection for society more broadly, and the most vulnerable specifically. Additionally, militarized approaches to the enforcement of lockdowns are seeing rising cases of excessive use of force to maintain control over populations, reaffirming the reality that militarism is a consequence of patriarchy and based on notions of control and domination. Police brutality and other forms of state-sanctioned violence against women, girls, LGBTQIA+ individuals, people of color, immigrants, Afro-descendants and indigenous people, is a global mechanism supported by an economic system designed to exclude and assign, and then control, identities, roles, freedoms and privileges.

Patriarchal masculinities are central to this structure and manifest themselves in organized ways and through basic institutions as well as international development and human rights frameworks as narratives of white supremacy, 'macho' and grandiose political behaviors, and bolstering of militarized control systems. The global healthcare crisis of 2020 has exposed the fault lines in a system that is heavily invested in armament, surveillance and incarceration, while neglecting healthcare and social wellbeing for all its citizens. When the world needs investment and action on essential care work, many leaders are choosing authoritarian responses that play into narratives of fear and division.

Why do we work to engage men and boys and transform masculinities?

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) remains unacceptably high, constituting one of the most severe and widespread human rights violations of our times, now further exacerbated by COVID-19. MenEngage Alliance is outraged by this reality and we are committed to dismantling discriminatory norms that tolerate, justify and encourage VAWG, and which are at the root of other forms of GBV, including violence by men against people of diverse gender identities, children, adolescents and other men. MenEngage Alliance works to transform patriarchal masculinities as part of the solution to this global "shadow pandemic". We assess that there is a need to address the roles that men of all ages can play in preventing and responding to VAWG and examine the root causes of violence towards women and girls, including the socialization of men, unequal power relations, patriarchal systems and social norms around masculinities.

We believe work with women and girls is essential and can never be compromised. There is ongoing need for resources and other support for survivors and to promote women's resilience, empowerment and organizing. This includes women-led building of systems and structures of support, by women's rights organizations and feminist groups, as primary and secondary prevention mechanisms.

We believe work with men and boys is necessary to end VAWG. In every region and context, rigid gender norms, and harmful stereotypes, customs and practices socialize men and boys to respond to conflict with violence and to dominate their partners and others in their lives. As major perpetrators of all VAWG and GBV worldwide, the target audience for primary prevention, holders of social norms and influencers of other men, men and boys need to be engaged to eliminate violence. Given that the lives of women and men are inextricably linked, we see work with men and boys as an essential element in efforts to transform deeply entrenched gender inequalities across our societies.

We believe work with men and boys can have a positive, transformative impact on the lives of women and girls. There is a much broader spectrum of roles for men and boys to play than perpetrator or potential perpetrator of gender-based violence. Boys and men can play important roles as partners, allies, supporters and advocates for gender equality, by learning about gender inequalities and human rights, actively challenging discriminatory gender norms and the privileges men are granted under patriarchy, and speaking-up to end the culture of impunity that currently exists around VAWG. These roles not only prevent and reduce violence against women and girls, but can also improve the lives of men and boys by freeing them from these dominating and limiting aspects of masculinities. As an Alliance we promote critical reflections on what it means to “be a man” and explore non-violent, equitable and inclusive attitudes, behaviors and manifestations of masculinities.

We believe work with men and boys can be effective. As the evidence base grows on the effectiveness of engaging men and boys when done in gender-transformative manners, we believe this may be a missing element to complement the many decades of continued work and activism done by feminist women’s rights organizations and activists to end VAWG and GBV more broadly.

How do we carry out our work?

MenEngage Alliance’s work with men and boys stems from and honors the pioneering work and ongoing leadership of women’s rights organizations and movements. We acknowledge that we build on a precious heritage of feminist vision and analysis, including by placing the elimination of inequalities in privilege and power that result from patriarchy at the heart of our work with men and boys.

Work with men and boys must be done in manners fully accountable to women and girls, and other marginalized groups. Work on engaging men and boys and transforming masculinities is not an end in itself, rather a strategy to achieve the goal of women’s rights and gender justice for all. Interventions should be carried out in close collaboration with women and women’s rights organizations. Accountability to the women’s rights movement and to other historically-oppressed social groups is central to our work and we are committed to working as allies and in partnership with other activists, organizations, networks and movements. As such, we stand in solidarity with - and seek to add value to - the ongoing struggles for women’s autonomy, empowerment, equality and rights.

Going beyond merely engaging men and boys, we advocate for gender transformative approaches which seek to dismantle harmful norms, attitudes, customs, stereotypes, inequalities in power and privilege, in particular related to masculinities and manhood, including within institutional practices, which perpetuate discrimination and violence against women and girls. Gender transformative approaches 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. The concept, in a framework to understand how change happens, is part of a 'gender integration continuum' that classifies interventions as gender exploitative, gender neutral, gender sensitive or gender transformative. Gender transformative approaches with men and boys are those that go beyond merely 'engaging men and boys', or educating or raising awareness of men and boys on a particular issue, and seek to create a fundamental shift in attitudes and behaviors related to masculinity and what it means to be a man within a particular society or context. Men and boys play a key role in upholding and exercising these harmful norms, making them important actors in gender transformative interventions.

MenEngage Alliance believes that transforming patriarchal masculinities and dismantling stereotypical social norms should include interventions at all levels of society, based on a socio-ecological model of change: from interventions aimed at changing men's individual attitudes and behaviour, to changes in their interpersonal relationships; to interventions targeted at communities that aim to transform dominant social norms regarding gender and violence; interventions that aim to embed positive gender norms into institutions; and through the promotion of government policies and laws that engage men and boys in violence prevention and response. These efforts must include the engagement of community, religious and political leaders, most of whom are still men.

Ending VAWG/GBV/IPV and DV and engaging men and boys: the links

MenEngage Alliance would like to urge the Special Rapporteur to take into consideration the following points, which we strongly believe will strengthen normative measures⁴ to address prevention and accelerate the elimination of violence against women and girls.

In order to prevent violence against women its root causes must be tackled. This should include, but not be limited to, engaging men and boys, to challenge the underlying attitudes and social norms that lead them to commit violence. Existing frameworks largely fail to recognize the need to specifically address the social norms relating to masculinity that cause VAW, and the potential of policies and programs that target men and boys in their various roles to challenge these norms and attitudes.

Rigid gender norms and harmful perceptions of what it means to be a man or a woman, encourage men's use of GBV, granting them the power to dictate the terms of sex and control over resources. As a result, women are still too often in a submissive position, lack political and economic power and suffer from violence. The rigid gender norms and harmful practices that determine individuals' behavior, causing GBV and gender injustice, are upheld and reinforced by communities, civil society and institutions alike.

Men's use of violence against women is not random.⁵ There are clear factors that drive men's use of VAW and factors that support women's vulnerability to VAW, such as witnessing or experiencing violence as a child, norms and attitudes that support VAW, a lack of accountability and context of impunity, and

⁴ [OHCHR Report](#): Review of promising practices and lessons learned, existing strategies and United Nations and other initiatives to engage men and boys in promoting and achieving gender equality, in the context of eliminating violence against women
[Human Rights Council Resolution 35/10](#): Accelerating efforts to eliminate violence against women: engaging men and boys in preventing and responding to violence against all women and girls

⁵ Barker G., Peacock, D., (2012) Working with men and boys to promote gender equality: A review of the field and emerging approaches, 2012.

economic stress. These factors can be exacerbated in certain contexts, such as those with pervasive gender inequalities and patriarchal family structures; settings with unenforced or limited laws preventing VAW and areas of (post-) conflict. **The necessary fundamental transformation of harmful social norms to prevent VAW and promote gender justice can only be realized if international, regional and national human rights norms and standards on VAW recognize the root causes of violence and addresses the individual/relationship, community, civil society, institutional and governmental levels simultaneously and in a mutually reinforcing manner.**

Well-designed gender-transformative programs with men and boys that change underlying destructive gender norms are effective in reducing VAW⁶. These programs seek to reshape gender relations to be more equitable, and free both women and men from the impact of destructive gender and sexual norms.

Strategies to engage men and boys

We urge the Special Rapporteur to review the following critical documents which have advanced the international normative framework on the engagement of men and boys and transforming masculinities in the prevention and elimination of violence against all women and girls, including [Human Rights Council Resolution 35/10: Accelerating efforts to eliminate violence against women: engaging men and boys in preventing and responding to violence against all women and girls](#); and the subsequent mandated [OHCHR Report: Review of promising practices and lessons learned, existing strategies and United Nations and other initiatives to engage men and boys in promoting and achieving gender equality, in the context of eliminating violence against women](#).

To ensure they are scalable and sustainable, strategies for engaging men and boys should include interventions and transformations at different levels, based on a socio-ecological model: Interventions that aim to change men's individual behavior and behavior within relationships, together with women and girls; interventions targeted at communities that aim to transform dominant social norms regarding gender and violence; interventions that aim to embed positive gender norms into institutions such as the health and education systems, the military, etc.; and government policies and laws that engage men and boys in gender-based violence prevention.

Holding men accountable for the violence they have carried out must be part of comprehensive national strategies to end and prevent violence against women. Programs for men who have used violence against women can be part of comprehensive community support for women survivors of violence. When such programs are part of an effective justice system, connected to the community, and combined with adequate support and protection of women survivors of violence, they can be an important part of preventing future violence⁷. Furthermore, community approaches to hold men accountable for violence against women – in which survivors have the chance to hear and ask for justice from men who have used

⁶ Peacock, D. & Barker, G. (2014) Working with Men and Boys to Prevent Gender-based Violence: Principles, Lessons Learned, and Ways Forward. Men and Masculinities, Vol. 17(5) pp.578-599

⁷ Gondolf, E. (2009) The Survival of Batterer Programs? Responding to "Evidence-Based Practice and Improving Program Operation." Position paper presented at the policy symposium - Batterer Intervention: Doing the Work and Measuring the Progress. Sponsored by the National Institute of Justice and Family Violence Prevention Fund, Bethesda, MD, December 3-4, 2009.

violence – can be important elements in changing community norms and helping communities and individuals recover from violence.

Many and perhaps most men around the world believe that violence against women is a violation of rights, but most men are silent when men they know carry out such violence⁸. This affirms the importance of **bystander intervention and community accountability approaches** in which men and boys who already oppose violence against women are encouraged and supported to speak out when they see other men use violence. In numerous impact evaluation studies, such approaches - whether implemented in schools, communities, the workplace, or via sports – have shown effectiveness in changing men’s attitudes and enhancing existing community norms that affirm the unacceptability of VAW⁹.

While empowering women is essential, if programs only empower women, they can lead to backlash and increased violence by men¹⁰. On the other hand, several studies affirm positive changes in couple conflict as a result of efforts to **engage men to support women’s economic empowerment**. Few efforts, however, have been made to engage men as allies in women’s economic and social empowerment and to explore and promote cooperation between couples.

A significant proportion of men who use sexual violence do so for the first time as adolescents. Thus it is key to reach boys (age 10+) and young men when their attitudes and beliefs about gender stereotypes are developing and before the first perpetration of violence. Well-designed **group education processes** have repeatedly led to attitude changes, and in some cases, behavior changes associated with VAW¹¹. Training teachers and community-based workers to facilitate group education and school-based campaigns on VAW and implementing gender-sensitive school curricula can be effective in preventing violence.

Universal comprehensive sexuality education, with specific reference to gender and engagement of boys and young men, can prove effective in raising awareness of and preventing violence. Comprehensive sexuality education increases awareness about safe sex, sexuality, and healthy non-violent relationships. It can empower young women and men to negotiate the terms of sexual activity, understand the importance of consent, and learn how to resist peer pressure to engage in or accept VAW.

Boys who experience, and/or witness violence against their mothers, are 2.5-3 times more likely to use violence against partners when they become adults¹². Despite this, few children exposed to violence have access to ameliorative psychosocial support, and such services are seldom available in schools or in communities. **Secondary prevention approaches, such as group counselling and education, through**

⁸ Berkowitz, A. D. (2010). “Fostering Healthy Norms to Prevent Violence and Abuse: The Social Norms Approach” in Keith Kaufman, ed. *The Prevention of Sexual Violence: A Practitioner’s Sourcebook*, Holyoke MA

⁹ Banyard, V. L., Moynihan, M. M., Plante, E. G. (2007). Sexual Violence Prevention Through Bystander Education: An Experimental Evaluation. *Journal of Community Psychology*. 35 (4), 463-481

¹⁰ Peacock, D and Barker, G. (2012) “Working with men and boys to promote gender equality: A review of the field and emerging approaches.” Prepared for the Expert Group Meeting Prevention of violence against women and girls for CSW. Bangkok, Thailand 17-20 September 2012

¹¹ Engaging men and boys in changing gender-based inequity in health: evidence from programme interventions. Geneva, World Health Organization, 2007

¹² Barker G., Peacock, D., / Working with men and boys to promote gender equality: A review of the field and emerging approaches, 2012.

which young people who have witnessed violence at home can receive support are key to breaking cycles of violence and should be made available in all schools and community settings.

Engaging men as fathers and caregivers is a key strategy for ending cycles of violence. Programs with fathers and caregivers that emphasize alternatives to physical punishment, promote healthy and egalitarian relationships with mothers, and promote gender-equal child-rearing have shown promise in ending violence against women and children.

Men can also play positive roles in **changing attitudes towards survivors of gender-based violence in conflict and post-conflict settings**. Perpetrators need to be held accountable, and efforts should be put in transforming their societies by changing gender norms and the behavior of men based on non-violence, care and equality. Given the high exposure to multiple forms of violence during conflict, psycho-social support that enables men, women, boys and girls to overcome their traumas can prove effective in preventing future violence.

Promising practices to engage men and boys in the prevention, response and elimination of VAWG/DV during COVID-19

MenEngage Alliance members have been mobilizing from national to regional to global level to contribute towards the prevention, response and elimination of the rise violence against women and girls, people of diverse gender identities and sexual orientations during COVID-19, by engaging men and boys and working to transform harmful masculinities.

National

In **Mexico, the national MenEngage Mexico network**, under the leadership of MenEngage Alliance Latin America Co-Chair, established a series of webinars under the title: [Circulo Abierto](#) (Open Circle), leading long-format dialogues on dismantling patriarchy, standing in solidarity with feminist movements during COVID-19 and beyond, addressing structural barriers to the realization of women's rights amidst other relevant topics toward dismantling harmful masculinities. Several of these webinars included **accountable dialogues with women's rights organizations and feminist leaders and youth**, directly propelling dialogue about the pressing rise of violence against women and girls during COVID-19 and co-creating ways forward towards mitigating this reality. In addition, the national network has launched the campaign, [Hombres en Sana Convivencia: en esta contingencia, cuidar hace la diferencia](#) (**Men for healthy co-living: In this crisis, care will make the difference**), in partnership with **Red Nacional de Refugios (National Network of Shelters)**, in order to collectively strategize at national level, on how to ensure the appropriate protocol is in place to support survivors of violence receive the attention they need during the pandemic.

In **Costa Rica, Instituto WEM**, the coordinating organization of the MenEngage Costa Rica National Network, initiated a campaign entitled, "[Confronting the COVID-19 Crisis Together](#)" that includes a series of videos and posters with suggestions on what men and boys can and should do during the period of lockdown, as well as raising awareness of psychosocial issues that men and boys may face during the COVID-19 outbreak. The network has also been running **virtual men's support groups**, in which men are

able to discuss challenges and experiences during the COVID-19 lockdowns, and to model positive masculinities among each other as a means of support.

[Casa Municipal de Adolescentes y Jóvenes](#) (**Municipality of Adolescents and Youth**) from **Nicaragua**, has noted the importance of moving toward virtual platforms for psychosocial support for youth, including young boys and girls, noting that there have been no State plans to adequately confront or respond to the crisis, leaving civil society organizations to take on the burden of support.

In India, [Akshara Centre](#) along with partners has mobilized the support of **well-known public figures** to urge the public to unite against domestic violence. The video – available in three languages - Facebook ([English](#), [Hindi](#) as well as [Marathi](#)) and on Twitter ([English](#), [Hindi](#), and [Marathi](#))– calls for a **#LockdownOnDomesticViolence** by reporting it, acting as an active bystander, and actively raising our voices against abuse. MenEngage member **ICRW in India**, have been working with outreach workers in communities to spread awareness and work with their constituent groups, noting that lockdowns have been implemented in a very harsh manner across the country, and that during a major part of the lockdown, there was no support available for women or girl survivors of violence. The organization’s helplines were activated in order to respond to this gap and advertisements for helplines were published in newspapers.

Breakthrough in India, has been using its [social media handles](#) to share information about bystander intervention approaches and how men and boys can still intervene in situations in which they witness violence of other men and boys towards women and girls. Breakthrough also worked to engage important national celebrities and influencers from across sectors to share key messages denouncing that domestic violence is unacceptable. Breakthrough during this duration supported by collating a central list for all India helplines and sharing this information through their social media handles as well as through all the media coverage the organisation was able to generate on the issue.

[Seeothersides.com](#), **members in the US working on running domestic violence accountability programs for men**, developed a brief guide titled [6 steps for men to prevent domestic violence](#), to help men better manage their behaviours and emotions during times of heightened tension due of COVID-19 lockdown restrictions. The US-based organization **Ala Kuola**, which engages in a youth violence prevention program, noted that during COVID-19, accessibility to program mentors has changed considerably. Simultaneously, they have noted increased calls for assistance by youth. Many are concerned with their families and have had to make adjustments to their personal lives. The organization also provides services to victims of DV with the completion and filing of protection orders. However, due to funding they have temporarily suspended such services, although they continue to be accessible throughout the business day, holidays and weekends to provide information and guidance to seek a restraining order.

Member **organization MÄN (Sweden)**, have developed a series of podcasts titled: “[Men in isolation – a podcast from MÄN](#), which interviews people about their **relationship to isolation and loneliness**. MÄN also developed relevant infographics, including [Six things all men can do to show solidarity and support during the corona crisis](#)], which was shared widely over social media channels. In addition, the Swiss organization [männer.ch](#) has developed this [survival kit](#) to help men stay calm during this crisis. Since the start of COVID-19, the toolkit has been translated into more than 20 languages.

MenEngage member Overcomer Wellness Consultancy in Namibia, have responded to the COVID-19 crisis by making public television appearances and lobbying the general public to promote gender equality in their homes and families. They have also worked to spread awareness through panel discussions on SRHR and masculinities, inclusive of the experiences of LBGTQIA+ individuals.

The **MenEngage Spain network**, established the [Foro de hombres por la Igualdad in Sevilla](#) (the forum of men for Equality of Seville), which serves as a COVID-19 Virtual Men's Talking Circle, an organized space to discuss the impacts of men in "confinement", as well as the ways in which the COVID-19 crisis has deep gendered aspects including the impacts of patriarchy on the government response and potential future consequences.

Regional

The leadership of the **MenEngage Africa Regional Network**, came together to record these **messages on the need to encourage and inspire positive behaviours among men during lockdowns**, including encouraging men to participate in their equal share of domestic chores at home, and encouraging women and girls to take part in family decision making".¹³ These [audio messages](#) circulated across the region, and were representative of the voices of the MenEngage Africa Steering Committee chairperson and MenEngage Uganda coordinator, and coordinators of the national networks of MenEngage Botswana, MenEngage Tanzania, MenEngage Kenya, MenEngage Nigeria. These audio pieces have been placed on Chanel Africa, the South Africa Broadcasting (SABC)'s radio station that broadcasts to all of Africa.

Considering that there is paucity of data on GBV and VAWG in the face of this COVID-19 pandemic in Africa, **MenEngage Africa** has partnered with the Technical University of Kenya. The aim of the partnership is generating evidence around the impact of COVID-19 in Africa, so as to provide data that will be utilized to develop programs to respond to GBV during the pandemic period. This will help to reduce risk of GBV through prevention and mitigation strategies during the pandemic through to recovery stages, as well as strengthening national and community-based response systems to prevent and mitigate GBV and enable survivors to access care and support amidst and post the COVID-19 pandemic.

MenEngage Africa in partnership with UN agencies and strategic partners organized a number of webinars aimed at addressing VAWG during COVID 19, targeting different groups. The webinars which were both in French and English included one on addressing the impact of COVID 19 on refugees and migrants, and another one to mobilise religious leaders to speak up against the increasing VAW in their communities.

MenEngage Africa also developed an [opinion piece](#) and [infographics](#) on the gendered impact of COVID-19. These addressed the relation between the COVID 19 pandemic and gender inequality and gender-based violence which could not be overlooked. The infographics shared some of the gender norms and harmful practices that have established women and girls as primary caregivers, which was likely to be exacerbated by the pandemic and lockdowns enforced by governments in response to COVID 19. It called on men and boys to take action and support women and girls who are victims of VAW, be involved in care work and household duties during and post lockdowns and also engage in positive health seeking behaviour.

¹³ <https://soundcloud.com/sonkegenderjustice>

The leadership and membership of **MenEngage Latin America** rapidly mobilized through a social media Digital Activism Campaign to put forth two digital campaigns including [#MasculinidadesEnCuarentena](#) (#Masculinities in quarantine) and [#AislamientoSinViolencia](#) (#Isolation without violence), both of which facilitated messages from MenEngage members on how **men and boys can be active participants in promoting non-violent masculinities** during COVID-19 and disseminating messages as positive role models.

Challenging myths of masculinity during COVID-19 lockdowns, **MenEngage Sri Lanka/MenEngage South Asia members** rapidly developed the campaign: “[#MenOfQuality are not afraid to challenge myths of masculinities](#), encouraging men to act responsibly and equitably during the pandemic lockdowns. This series of videos of MenEngage members spoke to the need for men to take responsibility and act with accountability to the women and girls in their lives, sharing responsibilities at home, promoting peace in the household and combating common myths about masculinities which were proliferating during lockdowns. These messages were viewed over 4000 times on Facebook.

Global

As a global collective, **MenEngage Alliance** has been working to respond to the rise in domestic violence through various measures. As an Alliance of organizations working to engage men and boys and transform masculinities in gender justice, we have been standing in solidarity with, and working in allyship alongside feminist, women’s rights, SRHR and LGBTQIA+ partners in global advocacy and movement building efforts during COVID-19. **MenEngage Alliance advances accountable advocacy, which seeks to add value to feminist efforts, by articulating with broader feminist processes and providing expertise through a ‘men and masculinities lens’, when relevant and appropriate, while supporting, amplifying and standing behind feminist asks and processes at other times.** The Global Secretariat of MenEngage Alliance, has been participating in feminist organizing spaces, including the **Feminist COVID-19 Response Group**, made up of the Women’s Rights Caucus, Women’s Major Group and other feminist, women’s rights and LGBTQIA+ partners. The Alliance participated in the drafting of the [Feminist Collective Response to COVID-19 Principles](#), which lays out key principles for how governments should respond to the crisis in feminist ways. This document included guidelines on accountable, gender-transformative and feminist informed approaches to engaging men and boys in the prevention and response to VAWG during COVID-19.

The Alliance collaborated on the development of a briefing paper: [From Global Coordination to Local Strategies: A Practical Approach to Prevent, Address and Document Domestic Violence under COVID-19](#) and [accompanying Toolkit](#), which aim to raise awareness of increasing domestic violence and share best practices that our partners and feminist allies use to prevent, address, and document violence. Relevant strategies for how to engage men and boys and transform masculinities during the lockdown were included. Building allies and broadcasting positive examples of gender roles and behavior contributes to an atmosphere of non-violence and helps change patriarchal mindsets. Promoting feminist social norms not only works to deter violence, it can also encourage men, boys, and other allies to intervene and support those at risk before violence takes place. It also notes on the importance of encouraging men and other allies who condemn domestic violence to speak up and share their stories in ways that dismantle harmful stereotypes on gender roles and behaviors. Testimonies might include

vignettes about men taking up their fair share of household chores and sharing responsibility for other domestic tasks with women in their families, especially during COVID-19 lockdowns. They may also describe their role as fathers or caregivers who utilize peaceful alternatives to physical violence and promote gender equality among their children. This effort was carried out under the leadership of [MADRE](#), in collaboration with [Media Matters for Women](#), [Nobel Women's Initiative](#), [OutRight Action International](#), [Women Enabled International](#), and [Women's International League for Peace and Freedom \(WILPF\)](#), and MenEngage Alliance.

MenEngage Alliance has also mobilized to organize three webinars under the series: [Patriarchy, Masculinities and COVID-19](#). These have been attended by over 1500 global participants. These webinars have included the following pressing issues in the exploration of engaging men and boys, transforming masculinities and dismantling patriarchy during the pandemic, including: 1) [Practical approaches to engaging men and boys in gender-based violence prevention during COVID-19](#); 2) [COVID-19, gender-based violence, and masculinities \(which addressed the intersections of masculinities and violence against LGBTQIA+ individuals\)](#); 3) [Youth, Masculinities and COVID-19](#). The final webinar in this series, titled: **Militaristic Masculinities COVID-19, and Resistance**, will explore systemic racism in light of the murder of George Floyd, both in the US and abroad, drawing links between the impacts of COVID-19 on BIPOC communities, and the use of patriarchal militarism and police brutality to maintain systems of power and oppression over marginalized communities.

Together with the Prevention+ program, the Alliance organized the dialogue: [Engaging Men and Boys to Prevent and Respond to GBV: Practical Lessons During Pandemics](#), which highlighted the work of **MenEngage members in Rwanda (RWAMREC), Uganda (Reproductive Health Uganda), Lebanon (ABAAD), and Indonesia (Rutgers Indonesia)**, including how efforts to engage men and boys have been adapted in light of the pandemic, examples of gender-transformative interventions during quarantine and how these efforts have been articulating with feminist efforts at country level, and contributing to women's and girl's rights. The webinar was organized alongside the Prevention+ consortium partners (also MenEngage Alliance members), **Sonke Gender Justice, Promundo and Rutgers Netherlands**.¹⁴

At the global level, as **MenEngage Alliance**, we have been collating the work of our members across regions and countries, and widely disseminating some of these campaigns, actions and materials (such as videos, audio, and infographics) on a new webpage: [Digital Activism for Engaging Men during Covid-19](#). The page brings together materials developed by MenEngage Alliance members and partners around the world aiming to speak directly to and with men and boys, in order to promote non-violent, healthy, equitable, and caring ways of being men throughout COVID-19.

Additionally, we developed a [COVID-19 resources page to compile analyses, reports, research, resources and tools, especially those relevant to people working to transform masculinities and engage men and boys during COVID-19](#). Both of these efforts have been disseminated widely across various feminist networks, social media channels, and with partners and policy makers.

¹⁴ A separate submission to this process by the Prevention+ Program details the work of the program in depth.

MenEngage Alliance member Promundo-US, noted from partners on the ground (Colombia, Palestine, Kenya, Uruguay, Peru, Bolivia, Lebanon among others) that GBV service responders were receiving increasing an amount of calls and front line program staff interacting with families were reporting that tensions and domestic violence had increased. As an organization, they have been undertaking surveys to better understand how COVID-19 is affecting family dynamics, mental health and risk factors influencing or aggravating DV and inform advocacy campaigns with country tailored data; also undertaking similar surveys to better understand the support needs of male youth at this time. Additionally, Promundo has been mapping best practices to adapt gender transformative programming to remote modalities. The organization is also about to launch an [initiative](#) that seeks to promote healthy, equitable and non-violent ideas of manhood targeted to boys 8-12 and their parents/caregivers.

The MenCare: Global Fatherhood Campaign reported that in the United States, the *Caring Under COVID-19* study by Oxfam, Promundo and MenCare found that respondents reported increased stresses at home because of a higher care workload. A further finding was that respondents in the study said that "conflict and criticism in the household" had increased under social distancing. Respondents demonstrated an increase in anxieties, fears, conflict, and inability to find essential items during COVID-19, with some gendered differences. The report states:

[W]omen were more likely than men to report increased feelings of being “anxious or stressed” and “unmotivated or depressed,” while in a reverse trend, men were much more likely than women to report an increase in feeling “relaxed and happy.” The overall increase in stress and anxiety (reported by 49 percent of women and 41 percent of men) points to the emotional toll the country is experiencing amid a pandemic. These anxieties and stresses, combined with movement restrictions keeping people in close proximity within the same household, can be associated with conflicts or even an increase in acts of domestic and intimate partner violence, as many sources have already demonstrated during COVID-19.¹⁵ Worryingly, nearly one in five of all respondents (18 percent of men and 17 percent of women) said there has been “increased conflict/ criticism in the household” as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (Oxfam, Promundo-US, & MenCare. 2020, p17).

It was encouraging that men’s contribution to unpaid care work had increased during this time, however it was alongside women also doing more of the same care work.

Declaration: The information provided can be made available on the OHCHR website.

¹⁵ Oxfam, Promundo-US, & MenCare. (2020). *Caring Under COVID-19: How the Pandemic Is – and Is Not – Changing Unpaid Care and Domestic Work Responsibilities in the United States*. Boston: Oxfam, & Washington, DC: Promundo-US.