

Engaging boys and men for gender equality – men as part of the solution

ORAL STATEMENT AS DELIVERED BY RUTGERS WPF AT CSW58 ON BEHALF OF MENCARE+ PARTNERS

The new global Post-2015 Development Agenda aims to improve the position of women and girls. Engaging men as allies in this endeavour has been proven to work around the world. Men have the potential to contribute towards improving gender equality, and many men already do.

Around the world men are *doing their share of caregiving* at home, are *speaking out* against gender-based violence and are *supporting girls' and women's empowerment*.

To break through and change harmful and unhealthy perceptions of what it means to be a man, men and women together are redefining concepts of manhood, relationships, sexuality and caregiving.

In light of the Post-2015 agenda, the MenCare+ consortium wishes to emphasize the need to:

- 1 work with men as supportive partners in sexual and reproductive health and rights by engaging men in family planning and prenatal, maternal and child health to create better outcomes for women, children and men themselves;
- 2 prevent gender-based violence by engaging men as partners and allies, and by creating *safe spaces* for men and women to address harmful norms and work through past experiences of violence; and
- 3 encourage men to be involved as caring fathers, by advocating for a legal framework around parental leave and family-friendly policies.

Engaging boys and men is crucial and strategic to improve sexual and reproductive health and rights for all; to reduce gender-based violence; and to promote equal relationships.

Becoming a father is a 'life-event' that offers a chance to reach young men with a new perspective on what it means to be a parent. In South Africa, we have young father's group sessions, where we talk about the responsibilities, the insecurities and the excitement of becoming a father. I'd like to quote the words of a facilitator from one of these sessions: "Fathers grow into their role one day at a time ..." When men become more gender equitable, caring and engaged partners and fathers, there is less gender-based violence; women enjoy better sexual and reproductive health; children develop better; and men themselves become happier and healthier.

I believe all of us here together, we are united in our mission to achieve gender equality. Therefore, we must all ensure both women and *men* are included in our work! Thank you for your attention.

The MenCare+ Programme, developed from the tenets of the MenCare Campaign, is a three-year, four-country collaboration between Rutgers WPF and Promundo-US, created to engage men, aged 15-35, as caregiving partners in maternal and child health and SRHR.

The programme is supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and is being implemented in Brazil, Indonesia, Rwanda and South Africa.

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