

Forum to Engage Men (FEM)

Context

Forum to engage men (FEM) is a network of individuals and Organizations in India. The main objective of this network is to engage boys and men towards gender equality. It has its Secretariat at Delhi with six regional co-ordination centres. This network is also in interaction with similar networks at the South Asia and Global level.

In the last few years there has been an increasing recognition that it is necessary to work with men and boys to address issues related to gender inequality. There is an increased awareness that women's vulnerabilities can be effectively addressed by working with men and more specifically on critical concerns like sexual and reproductive health, HIV/AIDS and violence against women.

The work with men has come a long way and many groups are working with boys and men, Research studies are undertaken at various levels to deepen understanding on construction of masculinity and its impact. There have been various forums functioning towards gender equality; like Forum to Engage Men, Working with Boys and Men, SANAM, Men Engage towards gender equality. The need to integrate work with men as a conceptual issue has been established in a greater range of development interventions like sexual and reproductive health, maternal health, child rights and care, participation of women in governance etc. The need to understand men and masculinities has been greatly emphasized to make effective interventions on issue of violence and conflict.

The first Global Symposium on Engaging Men and Boys for Gender Equality took place in Rio de Janeiro in March 2009 with the theme '**Going to Scale**'. The Second Global Symposium on the theme of '**Expanding the Canvas: Deepening the Dialogue**' focusing on working with men and boys for development, gender equality and social justice, will be held from 10-13 November, 2014 in Delhi.

THE SOUTHERN REGIONAL CONSULTATION

Objectives:

- ✎ To provide an opportunity to academics, researchers, practitioners, activists of interrelated disciplines to share and learn from the experiences of each other.
- ✎ Create a safe space for discussion and dialogue on complex issues related to working with men for furthering work on human rights / social justice including partnerships with existing initiatives on gender and social justice based on a shared understanding.
- ✎ Identify new strategies and approaches to strengthen work with men and boys on gender equality.

Day -1

The Southern Regional Consultation was organized by (FEM) Forum to Engage Men, India towards the 2nd Global Symposium on “Engaging Men and Boys” on 13th and 14th September 2014 at Pallotti Centre, Madurai. Students, Scholars and Faculties from academic institutions, experienced personnel from non-governmental organizations and grass-root experts from all Southern States of India and the Union Territory of Pondicherry participated in the event.

The consultation was organized after a series of planning meetings with representatives from all the southern states. The programme schedule was designed based on the recommendations emerged from the planning sessions adhering to the objectives of Forum to Engage Men, India.

The event started with a brief welcome by Ms Tamilmoni from Ekta Resource Centre for women and was followed by self introduction of participants

The inaugural session started with the introduction to the Global Symposium by Mr.Ashis Biswas, the representative from the Secretariat. Using a PPT he detailed about the Global process as well as the National process leading to the 2nd Global Symposium in November, 2014. He highlighted about the role of Regional Consultations that would sharpen and strengthen the focus for the Global Symposium.

He shared that Men Engage is an Alliance of more than 400 organisations that aims to engage men and boys for gender equality so that society becomes more caring and non-violent and gender relations become more harmonious, equitable and people lead fuller and richer lives. He also introduced the seven tracks of the Symposium.

Making of men: Exploring the different ways in which boys are socialized into men and the multiple influences, in this process.

Health and wellbeing: Exploring research and action into understanding and addressing men in different health related domains, including women and men's wellbeing.

Poverty and work: Examine the intersection of changes in work and employment on men's self concept, relationships with women and with other men and their actions.

Sexualities & identities: Exploring the diversities that exist in the world of men and masculinities and how a better understanding of these diversities may lead to changes in gender power relations and greater social inclusion and solidarity.

Care relationships and emotions: Looking at research, policy and activism to increase men's and boys' care-giving and emotional connections; this would result in gender equality, wellbeing of children and men's own health and wellbeing.

Violence: This theme is aimed at understanding how violence-perpetrating masculine identities are manifested, constructed and disseminated, the role of institutional structures and allied practices in constructing, as well as possibilities of reforming and projecting non-violent models of masculinity.

Peace building, social justice & inclusion: This theme is intended to explore how such efforts address masculinities and patriarchy and create opportunities for social solidarity and emancipatory praxis in the context of globalization.

Finally, he shared that around 900 delegates from around the world are likely to participate and there will be 100 breakout sessions. He urged participants to join in this process of unlearning and understanding.