

Towards a Feminist Agenda on Men and Masculinities.

Declaration of MenEngage Iberia

Sevilla 21st October 2021

Social change is not made from one day to the next, it implies the commitment and articulation of all those social forces working for the construction of a democratic society, based on healing and egalitarian justice through a process of reflection, analysis and the practical application of transformative proposals.

As MenEngage Iberia we are presenting this declaration as a result of a process carried out over six months, with territorial gatherings in Andalucía, Extremadura, Madrid, Euskadi, Catalunya, Murcia, País Valencia and Castilla la Mancha. It is an open-ended process that aims to continue drawing together the voices and support that we've witnessed in our first face-to-face Iberian Encounter (*Encuentro Ibérico*) this 21st of October 2021 in Sevilla.

The people who have participated in these open and plural spaces, come from social movements, NGOs, public and academic institutions. We all share the values of Gender Equality promoted by feminisms, and are committed to the egalitarian transformation of men and their masculinities. **We believe in the creation of intersectional mixed spaces and networks that are fundamental in order to advance in building an egalitarian society free from heteropatriarchal male-supremacist (*machista*) forms of violence.**

As Nobel Prize winner José Saramago noted, this *machista* violence is a problem of men that women suffer from. We begin from the premise and conviction that we need to involve men in the eradication of all forms of violence towards women and towards all those who do not conform to heteropatriarchal norms.

We believe that this egalitarian transformation of men and masculinities must be done by changing our current economic and political structures, social values as well as our personal behaviour. We propose that it is urgent to dismantle patriarchal masculinities, transforming the day-to-day behaviour of men in relation to equality, care duties, *machista* violence, gender income gaps etc.

Given the pressing tasks and challenges imposed by sexist inequalities and *machista* violence, MenEngage Iberia urges public and private institutions and citizens in general to consider men not only as part of the problem but also part of the solution. In order to achieve equality and eradicate patriarchal violence it is vital that we involve men in processes of active and critical transformation that must include the recognition and modification of the privileged position that men occupy in society. This also means addressing the costs and issues associated with masculine roles that are made evident in multiple indicators of deaths due to high-risk behaviour and/or mental health problems.

We need the participation of the different levels of public administration in implementing policies based on feminist agendas on men and masculinities aimed specifically at the male population. We believe that these policies must be designed with the participation of civil society and that they must, unconditionally, be accountable to the feminist movement.

Equality needs men and men need equality. And for this we believe:

- We need to include the work aimed at creating change in men as an aim of public policies on gender equality, as well as considering them active subjects in order to achieve this. All this comes from the fundamental conviction that change in men is only possible when based on feminist principles.
- It is important to make male privilege visible, and put an end to it by focusing on the responsibility of men themselves in perpetuating or eradicating this privilege.
- It is vital that we acknowledge and highlight the costs that hegemonic masculinity itself supposes for men.
- We need to act with urgency faced with the reactionary and violent speech and discourse of part of our society, which contribute to increasing the number and seriousness of heteropatriarchal male-supremacist violence.
- We must develop a common discourse that reinforces the lines of work and collaboration already being done by diverse entities, sharing and exchanging experiences and work in order to develop concrete and effective strategies for public policy and practice.
- It is vital to foment egalitarian values among boys and young men through educational systems and plans that enable them to develop freely, placing life and care at their centre.
- It is essential that we involve men in taking co-responsibility for unpaid care work and as a minimal requirement to reduce the gender income gap and the mental and emotional burden that most women bear.
- We need to apply an intersectional lens that enables us to appreciate that not all men are in the same situation and as such not all of them are situated in the same place in the power axes of domination and subordination. This means designing actions that are adapted for different profiles of men that include other factors that generate inequality such as classism, racism and colonialism.
- The existence and leadership of feminist spaces is fundamental. Today's feminisms form the movement in practice and theory that with the greatest strength challenges a social model based on patriarchy, and lays on the table proposals for building a better world based on sustainability and equality.
- We need to emphasise that any action aimed at involving men must be done without undermining the resources already assigned to women for promoting equality and eradicating gender violence.
- It is vital that actions aimed at working with men are subject to processes of accountability, which from the outset must assess their objectives, impact and reach.
- Deep structural economic and political changes are necessary that respond positively to the problems of a society that is becoming increasingly complex and unequal.

With the aim of dismantling patriarchy in society we propose:

- That the public policy that promotes change among men in favour of greater equality be continued and increasingly joined up over time. That they don't depend on political interests but rather on the political will to solve problems. That they be of a strategic nature and economically sustainable. That these policies be cross-cutting and intersectional (taking into account different forms of existing masculinity, as well as the different social oppressions that permeate our societies), and at all times subject to processes of accountability.
- Making visible and bringing together men who are modelling diverse, plural, positive and equal forms of masculinity, and who put care, equality and non-violence at the centre of their lives as an alternative to a hegemonic masculine identity which is closed and homogenous and perpetuates inequality, violence and heteropatriarchal male-supremacist culture.
- Supporting and implementing actions that contribute to women's empowerment on a par with those promoting the dismantling of patriarchy among men and in society as a whole.
- Reflecting about and practicing methodologies for intervening in society that address the connection between the privileges afforded to men as a social group, and the costs that hegemonic masculinity implies for them.
- Increasing academic knowledge and rigour, through research and diagnostic studies on the behaviour, needs, aspirations and desires of men, given that the commitment and active role of academia is vital.
- Putting forward feminist discourses about masculinities that reach men and dismantle and de-legitimise current neo-*machista* and anti-feminist narratives.
- Consolidating a citizens' movement of Men for Equality that works in favour of an egalitarian society free from heteropatriarchal *machista* violence.

We call upon all people active in political and social spheres to take responsibility for changing the present system of social injustice derived from the perpetuation of the patriarchal system and we urge you to use and appropriate this declaration in order to advance in achieving a society that is equal, diverse, humanitarian and built on the foundation of the human rights of all people. Towards this end we will modestly contribute our efforts, work and dreams with the conviction that only a society based on diversity and equality will allow us to live in freedom.