



Beyond just male engagement:

The future of addressing masculinities in sexual and reproductive health programmes and policies

Achieving gender equality while improving sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) for all includes revisiting gender norms related to masculinities. SRHR research, policies and programmes addressing masculinities must go beyond engaging with men and boys as individuals, to address how gender norms, power relations and roles are addressed in homes, communities, institutions and laws and policies.

Future research on masculinities and SRHR must take on a gender transformative approach

Through an inclusive and systematic process of engagement with global stakeholders, a research priority setting exercise has outlined an agenda to steer the next decades of research funding and research on masculinities and SRHR.

About the research

A global research priority setting exercise was commissioned by the World Health Organization's Department of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Research in collaboration with the Queen's University Belfast, MenEngage Alliance, University of Western Cape and Stellenbosch Universities. Results have been published in a [Lancet Global Health article](#)*.



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What was the process?

The process started with conducting [systematic reviews](#)¹ and [evidence and gap maps](#)² of what is already known about engaging men and boys in SRHR. These reviews showed that the published research on male engagement in SRHR was limited to some, but not all areas of SRHR. Most of the published studies did not explicitly address gender equality in their efforts to engage men in SRHR. What was missing was research on male engagement in SRHR with an explicit gender transformative perspective. The next step in the process was, therefore, to identify research priorities that would address gender equality explicitly as a goal of engaging men and boys in SRHR.

This process involved consulting with a wide range of stakeholders using an adapted CHNRI methodology. The consultation engaged a diverse group of experts, and aimed to identify future research priorities for approaching masculinities in SRHR through a gender transformative approach.

The key directions for future research arising from this exercise are:

1. Gender transformative approaches to men's/ boys' engagement in SRHR.
2. Applied research to deliver services addressing diversity in SRHR among men and women and to generate gender equality.
3. Research designs to support participation of target audiences and reach policy makers.
4. Research that addresses the priorities of those in low- and middle-income countries.

The underpinning 26 research priority questions can be found [here](#).

The exercise gathered over **300 research questions** from over **70 diverse global stakeholders** in focus group discussions and **engaged 150 stakeholders** to consider the **26 priority research questions**.

Who participated?

MenEngage Global Alliance led on engaging stakeholders from across 60 countries in seven different regions of both the global north and global south. Stakeholders participating in the exercise included representatives and professionals from research centers and academia, local, regional and international civil society organizations, advocacy and policy making institutes and agencies and activists.

Stakeholders in low- and middle-income countries** called for closer attention to:

- What role masculinities play within institutions in influencing policies and services?
- How do social movements on SRHR and gender equality link to broader social-change movements?
- What are the longer-term impacts of gender-transformative programming?
- How do masculinities affect SRHR in humanitarian settings?

**Brennan-Wilson, A., Marques, M., Coates, A., Amin, A., et al., Masculinities and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights: A Global Research Priority Setting Exercise, Lancet Global Health*

***There was strong consensus across all types of stakeholders, practitioners and policy makers and researchers, in relation to priorities. However, there were some significant differences in the research priorities of participants from low- and middle-income countries compared to participants from high-income countries.*

1 Ruane-McAteer, E., Gillespie, K., Amin, A., et al., (2020). Gender-transformative programming with men and boys to improve sexual and reproductive health and rights: a systematic review of intervention studies, *BMJ Global health* 5(10), e002997 <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjgh-2020-002997>.

2 Ruane-McAteer E., Amin A., et al., (2019). Interventions addressing men, masculinities and gender equality in sexual and reproductive health and rights: an evidence and gap map and systematic review of reviews, *BMJ Global Health*, 4(5), e001634. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjgh-2019-001634>.