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TRANSFORMING 'MEN'-TALITIES, REDEFINING MASCULINITY

Addressing Violence Against Women: Engaging Men as Agents of Change

The Persistent Challenge of Gender-Based Violence

- Despite decades of advocacy, violence against women remains a pressing global issue. Nearly one in three women worldwide endures violence, primarily perpetrated by men. Addressing this requires not only challenging perpetrators but also redefining traditional notions of masculinity.
- The deeply ingrained ideas of strength, aggression, and control need to be replaced with values of equality, empathy, and non-violence to create a more inclusive and respectful society.

Why Violence Against Women is a “Men’s Issue”

- The roots of gender-based violence lie in societal norms that shape boys from an early age, teaching them that dominance equates to strength and emotions signal weakness. These harmful stereotypes harm not only women but also men, limiting their ability to form healthy relationships and express themselves authentically. Recognizing this issue as a men’s problem as much as a societal one is essential to fostering meaningful change.

The Role of Men and Masculinities in Advancing Gender Equality

- Over the past two decades, the development sector has increasingly focused on engaging men and boys as pivotal participants in gender equality. Grassroots efforts and academic research highlight the effectiveness of involving men in challenging traditional gender norms. As more men recognize their role in dismantling toxic masculinity, they actively contribute to creating an environment that supports gender equity.

UNESCO’s Transforming MENTalities Initiative

- UNESCO’s **Transforming MENTalities** initiative exemplifies how engaging men can drive social transformation. By challenging rigid stereotypes and promoting positive roles for men, this initiative fosters active male participation in advancing gender equality. Through education, open dialogues, and inclusive approaches, it aims to redefine masculinity and promote a culture of respect and equality.



Engaging Men and Boys in India: A Report on Pathways to Equality

- The report, *Engaging Men and Boys: A Report on Pathways to Gender Equality in India*, documents pioneering programs that address gender inequality by involving men and boys. These interventions encourage critical dialogues, reshape concepts of masculinity, and promote inclusive attitudes.
- Programs such as **Mardon Wali Baat** and **Gender Equity Movement in Schools (GEMS)** highlight the potential for transformation when men critically examine traditional gender narratives.
- **Mardon Wali Baat**: An initiative by The YP Foundation, this program uses storytelling and social media to help young men challenge limiting stereotypes and embrace values of equality.
- **GEMS**: This program, developed in collaboration with the Rajasthan Department of Education, uses interactive classroom activities to help adolescent boys reject toxic masculinity and adopt equitable gender attitudes.

Everyday Actions for Change: Small Steps, Big Impact

- Other initiatives, such as **Dekh Rekh** and **Hamari Shaadi**, focus on engaging men in daily family activities like nutrition and household chores. These programs demonstrate that integrating gender equality into everyday life fosters enduring change. By making these practices accessible and relatable, they encourage men to become advocates for gender equity within their households and communities.

The Influence of Positive Role Models

- Role models play a crucial role in reshaping societal norms around masculinity. Public figures who demonstrate equitable behaviors, such as taking paternity leave or sharing caregiving responsibilities, help normalize gender equality. Their actions underscore the importance of partnership, empathy, and respect in relationships, inspiring others to follow suit.

The Path Forward: Redefining Masculinity

- Achieving true gender equality requires men to actively challenge stereotypes, reject violence, and address the privileges granted by patriarchy. By reflecting on and reshaping their roles, men can dismantle toxic ideas of manhood and foster a culture of respect and inclusivity. This transformative journey not only uplifts women but also liberates men from restrictive norms, enabling healthier relationships and communities.

Conclusion: Towards a World of Equality and Non-Violence

- The path to gender equality is long, but the active participation of men is vital. As we celebrate those who are “Transforming MENTalities,” let us commit to redefining masculinity and creating a world where everyone, regardless of gender, is free from violence and



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empowered to thrive. Together, we can build a future rooted in equality, empathy, and shared progress.

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