



Series: Best Practices in South Asia of Engaging Men and Boys to Transform Gender Discriminatory Practices

Resisting 'Karumaya' (*The fate of women*)

Engaging men and boys on gender equality in Sri Lanka

Centre for Health and Social Justice
&
MenEngage Alliance South Asia

CASE STUDY : 3

'KARUMAYA' AND ITS CONTEXT

Protecting the family's 'good name' is often a burden for women and ends up concealing excesses of patriarchal power like domestic violence. Culturally, women are trained to a fatalistic attitude of resignation towards such suffering: this construction of femininity attributes such suffering to a woman's fate or 'karumaya'.

In common with much of the world, gender and sexual

relations in Sri Lanka are dominated by a heteronormative patriarchy. The mainstream social understanding of sex is the biological difference between female and male bodies, and gender as the cultural elaboration of this difference. Sri Lanka is yet to decriminalise homosexuality and there is no open LGBTQIA culture.

Women in Sri Lanka are still mostly valued for their reproductive roles, with their sexuality domesticated within marriage. Motherhood remains

the ideal embodiment of femininity. Women who explore their sexuality outside marriage risk social censure. They are objectified through slurs such as "baduwa" or "kælla," Sinhala words literally meaning "thing." Conversely, masculinity is not solely defined by fatherhood as much as by sexual prowess, essentially heterosexual. The derogatory term "ponnaya," or effeminate man, is used for a man who identifies as homosexual. Like other cultures and societies, the family is the

preeminent site of gender and sexual ideology in Sri Lanka, reinforced by the formal education system, religious institutions and other socio cultural mechanisms.

This hegemonic patriarchy has resulted in high violence against women and children. Despite the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act of 2005 empowering women to seek redress and the protection of the law, the shame and fear of stigmatization prevents victims from coming forward. As the Joint Civil Society Submission to the Universal Periodic Review (March 2017) notes, “families tend to hide an incident of rape or sexual assault ... for fear of 'tarnishing' their family names and bringing 'shame' upon the family” (Centre for Policy Alternative and Family Planning Association of Sri Lanka).

Further, discussion on sexuality in families and schools is taboo. Violence against women and children is, in all likelihood, massively underreported. Lack of awareness about protection services and fear of being met with scepticism and hostility by law enforcers further discourage victims from identifying



Family Camps: Bonding through light-hearted fun encourages a pattern of interaction intended to promote better gender equality at home. © FISD

themselves.

Informed by this perspective, the Happy Families and Be The Change projects of the Foundation for Innovative Social Development (FISD) endeavour to engage people in addressing gender based violence (GBV), with a focus on securing men's commitment to individual, family and social transformation towards gender equality.

Happy Families (translated into Sinhala as Sathutu Pavul) targets mostly men in the roles of husband and parent and Be The Change (Venasak venuven pirimi api) speaks to boys, youth and

men in general, irrespective of marital status. The two projects are linked, sharing and reinforcing the same goals to confront traditional notions of masculinity and prevent violence against women and girls. Their common focus is on building equitable relationships with intimate partners, peer groups and society. They address concerns of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and GBV.

THE ORGANIZATION AND ITS STRATEGIES IN ENGAGING MEN AND BOYS

FISD was launched in July 2011 through an activist agenda

- They taught you that drinking alcohol is a "guy thing".



Did you know that alcohol tastes bad and could make you very sick?

Did you know that spending the money you worked so hard to earn just to prove that you are a "man" is a complete waste?

Trying to be a "man" has cost you your health!

focused on tackling “the harm caused by alcohol, tobacco and drugs, the prevalence of gender-based violence, and the abuse and neglect of child rights.” The organisation works in Anuradhapura, Colombo, in the districts of Gampaha, Hambantota, Matale, and Moneragala through a network of district offices and coordinators, with policy and programme inputs at regional and national levels. It works with children, youth, girls and women and men and boys.

The engagement of boys and men is seen by FISSD as crucial for the transformative process. In designing the Happy Families and Be The Change projects, FISSD made the following assumptions:

If you are losing so much just by trying to "be a man", shouldn't you try to make a change?



- Gender-based violence fundamentally originates in the patriarchal social system
- Interventions to address GBV must analyse and deal with the power dynamics between women and men and culturally-constructed norms of femininity and masculinity
- Women's empowerment is crucial but can only be a partial solution. An effective methodology is to garner men's active, tangible support: how men could be challenged to undo gender conceptualisations and stereotypes which ensure male dominance within the domestic and public spheres? How could men be persuaded to cede power, and willingly?
- Men need to perceive and embrace compelling benefits to themselves as motivation

“Masculinity” HAS COST YOU SO MUCH

Isn't it worth thinking about?



Pamphlet breaking down how stereotypical masculinity hurts men ©FISSD

to change a power imbalance which already works to their advantage

The campaign's name Happy Families came from the participants who felt that it created a conducive environment for people to engage in the project and helped men in particular to accept the project's goals. Rather than viewing it as a so-called “women's project,” the Happy Families approach created a space for men's involvement.

The Happy Families Impact

In October 2016 a men's peer group was initiated in Ranthanapitiya village of Monaragala division after one of the village leaders, Gamini, interacted with FISD's District Programme Coordinator of the GBV programme in Moneragala.

Initially, just a few men joined the group. They were keen to make a change in their lives as men as well as in their families. They were aware that women in their village were undergoing a self-development programme and were impressed with the changes in the women and their improved confidence and perspective on life and family. The men too wanted to live with greater self-esteem. The group met every month at a member's home, giving an opportunity for that family to get a better understanding of the group and support the Happy Families initiative.



After a few meetings the group decided to institute some criteria and guidelines (which they called their constitution). They discussed the changes that each of them could bring about in themselves and how they could motivate each other to change. They planned common activities, sometimes as families, sometimes as individuals. They discussed and distributed Happy Families programme material on engaging men, being a loving father and relationship-building. They discussed how to become role models for their children and also how to support and be instrumental in violence prevention process within the village.

One of the group members' MD Wijayarathne, a well-off timber merchant, experienced a major change in his life. Wijayarathne had started as a social drinker while interacting with his many business connections, but then became an alcoholic who used to spend huge amounts of money on drinking. He neglected his family and did not save money for household needs, putting his wife and two children to great hardship. **"My husband used to earn a lot of money but we still did not have even a proper chair to sit on in the house,"** his wife said.

After joining the FISD peer club in his village, Wijayarathne started participating in its programmes like the Happy Families programme, Family Camps, Fathers and Daughters programme, Problem Tree discussion, men's hygiene and self-care programmes etc. Eventually, he became an active member of the peer club and there was a great change in his attitude and behaviour. He is now one of the most active members' of the club and has proposed a new constitution in the club with features such as no alcohol or drugs to be allowed in any of the Happy Family meeting premises. **"My husband's addiction has been reduced considerably, he spends more time with us and attends the children's school meetings,"** says his wife. Wijayarathne has also been able to save enough money to start building a new house. **"My wife, children, parents and siblings all are proud of me. I now also have social acceptance of neighbours and community members. I could change my life in a decent way because of the Happy Families programme,"** says Wijayarathne.

While both the **Happy Families and Be The Change** projects target individual men to redefine masculinity, the impact is intended to extend outwards through men's personal and social relationships, within their families, peer groups and communities. FISSD intends to reshape hegemonic codes of masculinity in social relations through the following principles:

- Women and men will redefine their identities and perceptions of the other gender, moving away from prevailing prejudices and cultural stereotypes about femininity and masculinity
- Men will transform their view of themselves and make changes in their attitudes and family and social interactions, accepting the need to bring about more equal gender relations
- Men will become agents of change by influencing their peers also
- Women will have more power to negotiate their choices and roles and in family and society
- Women and men will realise their full individual potential

THEORY OF CHANGE -Happy Families-

Happy Families counters behaviours arising from male dominance in the family by rearticulating gender relations from a zero-sum equation of power – where greater empowerment of wives, mothers and children means a loss of power for men – into a net gain for all parties in terms of their emotional relationships. On the one hand, the programme initiates a dialogue with men and their families by posing them the questions: What can you do to be a better husband and father? But the motivation for men participants to undertake positive personal transformations that protect women and children's rights is the realisation that it contributes to the men's emotional satisfaction as well. In other words, Happy Families presents a less asymmetrical distribution of power within the family as to the man's advantage.

PGD Samitha Sugathimala, FISSD Director and Gender Based Violence Programme Manager, explains, "The theory of change informing the Happy Families project is that there can be no transformation of power if the privileged party feels that they are losing out, relegated to a lower position, or made to feel equal with a powerless, vulnerable, or suppressed social group. It can only be addressed if men feel that their role has expanded from a narrow masculine framework to a wider spectrum where they do not have to confine themselves and abide by strict masculine norms."

THE PROCESS OF CHANGE – HAPPY FAMILIES

With this theory of transformation, the Happy Families principle of engaging men hinges on forging a strong connection between men's behaviours and attitudes and their emotional relationships within the family circle. The approach takes into consideration the many patterns of behaviour arising from the exercise and abuse of patriarchal power inside the family, for instance:

- The assumption/attitude that all labour within the home – from childrearing, to cooking, cleaning, grocery shopping etc “naturally” fall to the wife/mother's lot
- Refusal to provide adequate financial support to the family despite having the capacity to do so
- Absent, neglectful or emotionally distant fathering
- Emotional and physical abuse (including domestic violence against women and children)
- Alcoholism or other

substance abuse

- The premise that the woman's sexuality is secondary, subservient to and always at the service of the man's libido, resulting in a lack of sexual fulfilment for the woman and leading to forced sex or marital rape
- Extramarital sexual conquests, infidelity, etc
- Incest

Where men gather in the evening at village common places, says Sugathimala, "to avoid household work, childcare, financial and other crisis at home and instead to boast about their manliness, engage in alcohol consumption, sexual harassment, violence and other recognisably macho patterns of behaviour," it is here that the male peer group activities within the Happy Families programme engages gatherings of men for "discussions, dialogues, drama, role play, entertainment programmes and others." Opportunities are created for the men in these spaces to engage in productive ways to experience peer fellowship, social acceptance, and alternative means of expressing themselves

more openly and directly.

BE THE CHANGE CAMPAIGN

The participation of the youth promises a society with more equitable gender and sexual relations in the future. The Be The Change project works through the establishment of District Committees of men, currently operating in three districts - Moneragala, Hambantota and Matale. The committee leaders take responsibility for conducting awareness programmes and motivational activities in selected settings where men gather for various reasons, such as peasant societies, farmers' organisations, funeral fund societies, transport societies etc. The campaign ranges from door-to-door visits

to awareness through posters, stickers, dramas, and entertainment programmes.

Its other activities include:

- Awareness programmes at institutions that promote masculinity, such as the armed forces
- Formation of Youth Committees
- Workshops to challenge gender stereotypes organised in private and government educational institutions, universities, and private companies with considerable youth presence

Activities conducted through the 'Be the Change' Campaign at community, district, and national level include the formation of fifteen-member men groups in each of the villages in FISD's six programme districts, and

Let us strengthen and increase the happiness and progress of both women and men by lending our support to the Be the Change campaign.

Be the Change

How You Could Become a Part of "Be the Change"

- You could join the Be the Change campaign as an individual member by contacting us directly.
- If you are part of an organisation or association and are interested in joining our campaign as a group, you could obtain an Organization Membership for your organisation/association.
- If your association/organisation is actively involved in preventing gender based violence in your locality you can contact us to support you in incorporating the concept of men's involvement in preventing gender based violence into your programmes.

Membership in the National Movement

- Membership is open to all men and boys who are interested in working towards preventing gender based violence at individual, community, or national level.
- Men and boys aged 16 years and above are welcome to apply.
- Individual or group membership can be obtained depending on your ability to contribute.
- An annual membership fee of Rs 50/- will be charged. This is an investment you will be making on behalf of your daughter, wife, sister, friend, or mother.

As a Member of the National Movement

- * You will gain the admiration of your wife and daughter.
- * You will make the world a more fortunate place for your daughter.
- * You will be contributing towards building a safer society for your daughter, wife, sister, friend and mother.
- * You will uplift social development through the development of your family and society.

FISD - Be the Change
Men's and boys' national campaign on the prevention of gender based violence

- To become a member
- To contribute your ideas
- To get our support in your programmes

Contact us:
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Men's and boys' national campaign on the prevention of gender based violence

You would not like your daughter, sister, wife, friend, or mother to be harmed or oppressed by other men. In fact, you may feel disgusted at the very thought of it....

FISD **මහලොව මෙම වෙනසක්**
Foundation for Innovative Social Development

awareness campaigns at community, divisional and the national levels. At the community level the campaigns range from door to door visits through the FISS CBOs to awareness through posters, stickers, dramas and entertainment programmes.

District committees of men have been established in the Moneragala, Hambantota, and Matale districts where the

committee leaders have taken the responsibility of conducting awareness programmes and motivational activities in selected settings where men gather for different reasons (eg. 'peasant societies', funeral fund societies, CBOs, transport societies etc.). Other activities conducted through Be the Change include the formation of Youth Committees, the conducting of awareness

programmes at institutions that promote masculinity such as the national armed forces, and dissemination of men engage awareness materials and formation of men groups towards challenging masculinity through the FISS national women network of likeminded organizations covering various parts of the country. Training programmes on gender equity were also conducted in these

THEORY OF CHANGE

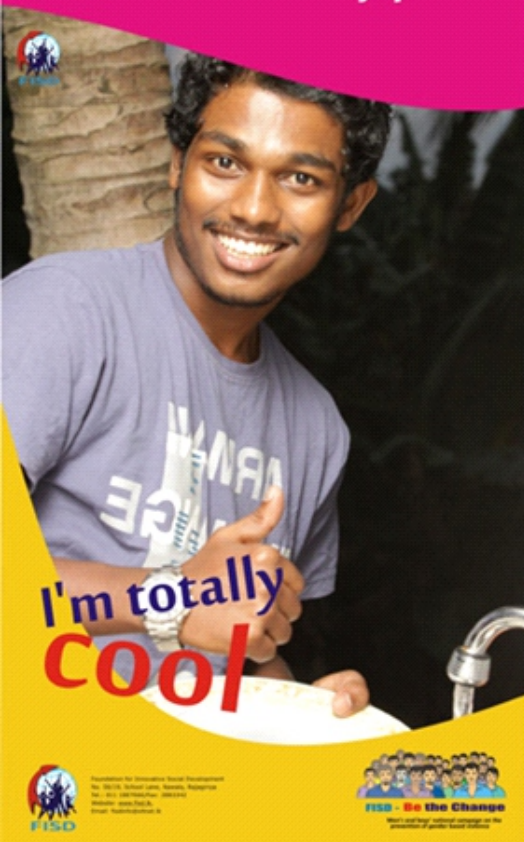
Be The Change Men and Boys: MenEngage National Campaign on the Prevention of Gender Based Violence

Be The Change is FISS's flagship programme to co-opt men and boys into challenging patriarchal relations through radical transformations in personal identity. Its strategic essence lies in presenting dominant notions of masculinity as inimical not just to women and children, but to men themselves. The campaign reveals the constructions of identity, perceptions, attitudes, expectations, behaviours etc. associated with traditional codes of masculinity as exacting a cost on men, psychologically, emotionally and in terms of their familial, peer and social relationships.

Specifically, Be The Change targets macho characteristics buttressing gender inequality and gender based violence, including but not restricted to: emotional restraint and stoicism (leading to non-nurturing behaviour), physical strength and a certain ideal body type based on a developed musculature etc, tendencies towards competitiveness and dominance, compulsory heterosexuality and demonstrated sexual prowess, ambition and assertiveness, focus on achievement and success (an emphasis on always winning), assertiveness, aggression to the point of violence, courage and toughness, thrill-seeking, an outward focus of the self away from the domestic sphere towards social spaces.

In keeping with its theory of transformation, the campaign "motivates men to challenge masculine ways of existence ... create a conducive environment where men cross the limitations of masculinity and still do not become losers but gain benefits at the level of the individual man, his family, and his community." Thus, the ideological and motivational heart of the campaign is in bringing radically non-patriarchal attitudes and behaviours within a new definition of masculinity. Thus, the campaign dynamic turns machismo on its head.

I don't depend on others to wash my plate



Pamphlets taking the effeminacy out of domestic chores to redefine a better masculinity ©FISD

organizations' working locations and men resource teams were formed with the collaboration of these organizations.

Prior to the launching of Be the Change, programmes are conducted with youth under FISD's Gender Based Violence (GBV) programme. These include programmes aimed at changing gender stereotypical attitudes and behaviours of youth (eg the Fun Kitchen cooking programme for boys). These attractive activities and some of the related campaigns (I am a Cool Guy

Campaign) aimed at promoting an alternate image of masculinity that helped boys deal with unidentified losses and negative effects of a masculine culture. Workshops are also conducted for youth in private and government educational institutes, universities and private companies where youth employment is high. Training programmes and workshops are conducted mostly in camp settings where boys have the opportunity to deal with masculinity issues within peer groups.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IS KEY TO THE CAMPAIGNS

The emphasis on community involvement and consensus building among the community is integral to the Happy Families and Be the Change operations. The projects use the following tools:

- Women's Collectives
- Family camps
- My Daughter and Me campaign
- Girls Change the World campaign
- Cool Guys, I Can Make a

Choice, and Bystander No More campaigns

- A host of promotional material – posters, booklets, bookmarks, stickers, pamphlets etc – developed with the campaigns

Instead of just having community participation in implementation of the projects, the community is consulted from the stage of problem analysis, project planning, implementation and setting up monitoring and evaluation processes. The emphasis is on creating a dialogue with people on contributing factors to violence in the family. The approach in making inroads into the community is to establish contact with village leaders and existing organisations before launching the Happy Families and Be The Change campaigns. For instance, District Coordinators meet with the head monk of the village temple and the local Samurdhi¹ organisations, peasants' societies, farmers' organisations, funeral fund societies, transport societies, etc. Being introduced

¹The Samurdhi Social Development Programme is a state social welfare programme targeting low income families in Sri Lanka.

We don't pass silly remarks at girls



Pamphlets taking the effeminity out of domestic chores to redefine a better masculinity ©FISD

into the community by its authority figures gives the projects legitimacy and an initial hearing with the people.

Through in-depth and honest discussion, participants identify power relationships as the root cause of violence against women based on men and women's different expectations, responses, roles and how each is valued by the other. Participants draw connections between the notion of happiness, the choices women and men make, the personal and societal costs they

bear, and the link to what they understand as gains or privileges.

The deep community involvement has two significant impacts - securing community ownership of the project, and preparing the ground for positive social pressure, approbation and peer support for the trajectory of growth that men will undertake to redefine notions of masculinity.

An intense process of consultation takes place with a community over 1-2 years to facilitate the unlearning of hegemonic patriarchal attitudes

and the substitution of new attitudes of gender equality.

Subsequently, the projects engage men into thinking about the emotional rewards of building better relationships with their wives and children: this motivates men to make changes in their modes of thinking and daily interactions with their families. The emotional fulfillment of becoming better husbands and fathers enhances positive aspects of masculinity, reversing the patriarchal value system and persuading men to shift the balance of power towards a more equitable



I Am A Loving Father: Breaking down the value system and actions of a loving, nurturing, and involved father, who does not discriminate between daughters and sons ©FISD

relationship with women. Men then become change-makers in their peer circles, demonstrating a positive masculinity that can ripple outward to their communities and broader society.

THE GAINS

The projects have resulted in parallel processes of transformation at the level of the self, family and community/society. Given the thrusts of the project, change is slow and gradual.

A major strand of the Happy Families programme is empowering women and girls towards self-advancement and prevention of gender based violence. The Women's Collectives convened by FISD, where women meet regularly in small groups, have been effective in undermining 'karumaya'. FISD found particular success with the model where in small groups "knowledge sharing is more easy and practicable," although the women had to go through a steep learning curve before the forum could become a space for positive peer support and encouragement. As the members built a sense of solidarity through

dialogue about the impact of patriarchal power in their lives, a sense of empathy and mutual responsibility for each other ensued. With this

sessions, sports and health camps, reflective activities, learning circles on women's rights, psychosocial interventions



'A women's collective meeting'

change, many women who lived in isolation due to family and relationship issues were sought out and drawn into the groups.

The collectives have provided a conducive environment for women to develop a positive self-image as well as gain confidence through knowledge and skills to challenge traditional masculinities in their families and communities. The collectives regularly undertake activities like: reading circles, dance and music workshops, motivational

such as relaxation sessions and group counselling sessions, skills training (including in non-traditional male work like electrical work), training on adopting a home management system emphasizing a fairer distribution of household roles and responsibilities between women, men, girls and boys, leadership training, training on primary prevention of GBV, campaigns to raise awareness on SRHR, formation of alert groups and meetings to coordinate with service providers.

Through the Girls Change the World campaign for building self esteem, young women in the age brackets of 13-15 years, 15-18 years, and above 18 years are reached out through schools, youth centres, vocational training centres etc. Activities undertaken with them include camps on personality development with special emphasis on gender socialisation and challenging stereotypes; camps on using cyberspace for prevention of bullying, harassment and violence against girls; and leadership training for peer education on navigating cyberspace safely.

These experiences support women to exercise agency beyond the 'karumaya' to "place themselves out of the framework which makes them vulnerable to violence, by challenging and deconstructing normative masculinity so that they no longer justify the excuse of alcohol men give for insulting, beating, and abusing women, physically, mentally and sexually." Community programmes for spouses, as well as parents and children, create a safe space for open communication and light-



hearted fun. Family members are gently nudged towards expressing their feelings of love and respect for each other, shaping and taking home a new pattern of interaction and communication. The family camps are a highly popular and successful, feature of the Happy Families platform. Both men and women report more stable relationships, better negotiation, more respect and more quality time with family members. Women in particular report being more comfortable and assertive in making decisions related to their own lives and making the necessary changes in their

homes for gender equality. "My Daughter and Me' campaign gives men the opportunity to redefine fatherhood and experience a relationship of quality with their children, spending more time with them. The message here is that fathers play a crucial role in nurturing their children's emotional development. The project challenges the stereotypical binary definition of men as outward-focused, emotionally distant providers and women as inward-focused, instinctive caregivers. The forums under My Daughter and Me allow daughters to articulate and share



Family Camps

their dreams and life expectations, so that fathers agree to support their future, unconstrained by social stereotypes of ideal womanhood and women's typical roles and responsibilities.

Thus, through various dimensions of the Happy Families programme men are motivated to challenge their own misconceptions that connect happiness with alcohol. Male participants are shown how to derive emotional fulfillment through realising their full potential as partners and parents, throwing off the shackles of a hegemonic

masculinity.

The establishment of FIRD Civil Society Organisations (CSO) is the culmination of the programmes that have been conducted in the communities up to the present. The establishment of CSO aims at creating and strengthening a civil society within the village that is able to continue with the programmes introduced by FIRD, ensuring the sustainability of the projects. A total of 90 CSOs have been set up so far and capacity building programmes are helping CSO members work in the five selected areas of social development: alcohol and drug

prevention, child rights protection and promotion, gender and development including work on men and masculinities, democracy and good governance, and the protection of the environment through social change and advocacy.

THE CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNT

Happy Families fights against gender inequality but may run the risk of tacitly reinforcing it, because the project does not question the patriarchal social order inherent in the husband-wife-children structure of the traditional family. For example, the concept of the paterfamilias is ingrained in current codes of masculinity: the husband and father as the head of the household and his wife and children as subordinate to him.

There is danger of directly or indirectly promoting patriarchy through non-questioning relationships at home, encouraging succeeding generations to internalise attitudes toward gender roles and responsibilities, which in turn shape and reinforces traditional, male-centred worldviews and

normative beliefs of how society should be organised. This traditional understanding of how women and men stand in relation to each other in marriage and family strongly undermines the goals of gender equality.

What the Happy Families project tries to do in the targeted communities is to invent a new way of looking at masculinity. It attempts to refashion masculine perceptions, attitudes and patterns of behaviour, guiding men to feel and value the emotional rewards of building more equitable relationships with women and children. But the lack of extreme manifestations of GBV such as domestic violence, incest and



'A Happy Families meeting in progress'

marital rape should not be the critical baseline for change in confronting patriarchal gender relations within the institutions of marriage and family.

There is a very real danger that participants in the projects might confuse the Happy Families concept with aspirations

towards bourgeois (and upper-caste) respectability. Since class, caste and gender networks of power intersect and overlap in society, there is a risk that conservative ideologies could reinforce each other, undermining progress made on one front if other aspects remain unaddressed.

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ABOUT THE CASE STUDIES

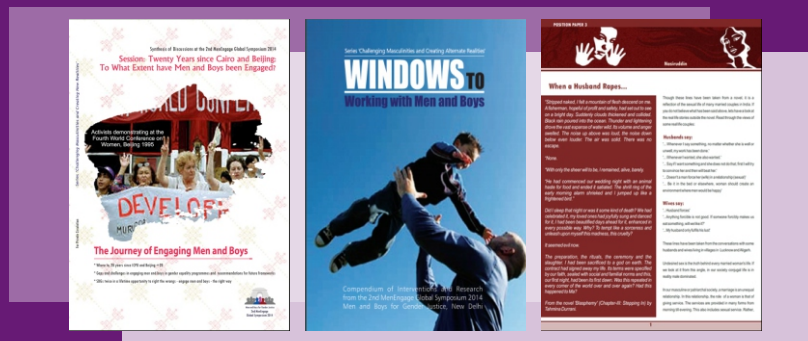
Five case studies have been put together by the Centre for Health and Social Justice (CHSJ) in *the series Best Practices in South Asia of Engaging Men and Boys To Transform Gender Discriminatory Practices.*

These are practices developed by MenEngage South Asia network's member organisations in Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh and India. The purpose of developing these case studies is to provide increased visibility to organisations and issues related to work with men on masculinity, gender based violence, sexual and reproductive health rights and gender equality. The five case studies are:

- 1 Engaging Men and Boys Against the Practice of Chhaupadi in Nepal
- 2 'Awaaz Do' (Speak Up) - Engaging Youth to Address Violence Against Women in Odisha, India
- 3 Engaging Men and Boys for Gender Equality in Sri Lanka - Resisting 'Karumaya' (The Fate Of Women)
- 4 Using Communications For Exploring Masculinities - Work With Young Men In Urban India
- 5 Engaging Boys And Men To Stop Acid Violence In Bangladesh

About CHSJ

CHSJ (chsj.org) is an Indian civil society resource organisation working on issues of masculinities and gender justice. It focuses on networking, capacity building, research and implementing strategies it has developed on working with men and boys for gender justice through field based interventions. Its work is grounded in 10 states. Some of the material brought out by its Resource Centre on gender and masculinities can be seen here:



<http://www.menengagedilli2014.net/knowledge-products-link-page.html>

<http://www.chsj.org/positions-papers.html>

<http://www.chsj.org/resource-centre-on-masculinity.html>

<http://www.femindia.net/>

About MenEngage South Asia

The global MenEngage Alliance (menengage.org) has a strong presence in South Asia since 2007, where it is known as MenEngage South Asia (MESA). Through country-level and regional alliances, MESA seeks to provide a collective voice on the need to engage men and boys in gender equality and addressing masculinities, to build and improve the field of practice around engaging men and boys in gender justice, and advocating before policymakers at the local, national and regional levels.