



WORKING WITH MEN TO ADDRESS GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

19 – 20 March 2012, Colombo, Sri Lanka

Background

Over the last few years there has been an increasing global research and articulation that is pointing towards the importance of working on gender issues with men and boys to achieve gender equality and preventing violence.

Recent interest and research on masculinities has opened up new possibilities of building interventions with men on issues of gender equality and especially on gender-based violence. This training programme has been prepared from the position that men have to be drawn into discussions on gender equality and that their active participation on these issues can be part of an over-all strategy to make work spaces free of gender-based violence and sexual harassment.

Working with men also implies that the lens with which we have traditionally looked at gender issues must be broadened to include an understanding of masculinities. Masculinity refers to the socially produced but embodied ways of being men. Its manifestations include manners of speech, behavior, gestures, social interaction, a division of tasks 'appropriate' to men and women and an overall narrative that positions it as superior to its perceived opposite, and femininity. This discourse of masculinity as dominant and 'superior' is produced at a number of sites and has specific consequences for women as well as those men who may not fit into the dominant and valorized models of masculinity. These sites include: customary laws and regulations, the state and its mechanisms, the family, religious norms and sanctions, popular culture and the media.

Furthermore, masculinity is often perceived as a privilege and a source of power that all men possess in relation to women. In this context, violence against women is explained always as acts of men to confirm their masculinity and power. However, masculinity, mediated through complex social relations, is not merely oppressive towards women but also towards men who do not conform or deviate from the dominant notions and practices of masculinity of their own class, caste, age and other social and cultural settings. In other words, the dominant masculinity not only controls and regulates women's lives but also of men. This invisibility of masculinities as a subjugating principle for other men too is critical for men to understand and explore because this has consequences for their own wellbeing. The process of self-reflection and awareness building is a critical foundation for transformation.

Masculinities is often interpreted by men as a 'natural essence' of being men, something that is anatomical, rather than a social process that makes them act and behave in ways that put them at risk and also support not just inequalities between the sexes but all other hierarchies. If violence, intimidation and the threat of violence are essential to maintaining all forms of social hierarchies, masculinities is the principle or the vehicle by which these essentials are activated and put into practice. Without

masculinities violence would lose its menacing edge and social hierarchies difficult to be maintained. It is important for men to understand these links between gender inequalities, masculinities and other forms of inequalities. While men are major actors in various actions for social justice, the area of gender relations remains ignored and its importance often under played and under-valued.

This training programme is an attempt to address this issue by taking men on a self-reflective journey of understanding their actions, behavior patterns and motivations through a gender lens and thereby moving towards becoming active in not only preventing gender-based violence in the work place but also thinking and acting in more gender equal ways in the domestic sphere.

Programme Objectives

- Enhance understanding of gender, gender-based discrimination and gender-based violence at work.
- Develop an understanding of masculinities and its relationship with discrimination and violence against women at work place.
- Identify and resolve barriers to men's active contribution towards making workspaces safe for women.
- Identify work place policies and strategies to make workspaces women friendly and gender equal.
- Motivate men to take personal steps to prevent gender-based violence.

Content

Participants will be able to acknowledge and understand the linkages between inequities, discrimination and violence related to gender on the one hand and the importance of acting upon these both within the work space and the domestic sphere simultaneously.

Methodology

Training methods will include presentations by an experienced gender equality trainer. They will also include individual and group learning activities in thematic fields and gender issues. Participants and facilitators will work in a highly participatory environment. Group work, brainstorming and discussions will complement presentations, with a view to stimulating participants' ability to link concepts and data to their own work and life experience.

Participants Profile

Male HR managers from MAS Holdings

Programme Language

Sinhala and Tamil (where required)

Handouts/USB

In general, the participants will not receive printed handouts of presentations. On the other hand, all participants will receive a USB flash drive with presentations, reference documents and other course material at the end of the programme.

Additional Comments

Participants are strongly encouraged to only use their mobile phones or notebooks during tea/coffee breaks and lunch.

All participants are requested to email the enclosed questionnaire by 14 March 2012 to shevanthij@masholdings.com by 14 March 2012.

For further information

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