

and masculinities vis-à-vis gender-based violence and reproductive health. We have also tried to create public awareness on these and other related concerns through innovative campaigns.

We propose to play a more pro-active role in the near future. This would entail taking a distinctive feminist stand on a wide range of relevant developments including the ongoing attempts to bring about a gender-neutral legal regime in India and the growing assertiveness of groups advocating 'men's rights'. We intend to do this by publishing reports and position papers, through consciousness-raising, as also by canvassing public support and contributing constructive inputs to the policy process. Besides, we will strengthen our organisational infrastructure and outreach, devise new strategies to effectively pursue our transformative agenda through meaningful interventions in education and the media, and creatively deploy a wide array of communication technologies to disseminate our message.

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We are a network of individuals and organisations, which was launched on an all-India basis in 2007, with the primary objective of working with boys and men to usher in a just and peaceful society. Alongside our shared participation in movements for gender equity, many of us have been active in various fields such as community development, public health, education and the arts. Professionally as well as personally, we have come to realize that it is critical to intervene in the area of masculinities for bringing about meaningful and durable changes in our fields of endeavor. While talking to boys and men, we often hear stories of the hierarchies that exist within the system of masculinities; we hear stories of violence, coercion and subjugation. We also hear stories of tenderness, yearning and camaraderie. The challenge that we face is to weave these stories into a coherent narrative, so as to expose the fault-lines in the oppressive masculinist order and to suggest ways of transforming it.

We understand masculinism as a gender system that distributes patriarchal privileges to boys and men in a hierarchical order. It discriminates against girls and women as well as subaltern boys and men by deploying violence to perpetuate inequalities based on class, caste, sexual orientation, cultural difference and physical appearance. The contradictions and conflicts built into masculinism can goad boys and men to break out of its vice-like grip. We have created a platform where they can jointly explore the ways and means of attaining such liberation.

We speak from the intellectual and social space created by a variety of feminist movements, both Indian and those originating elsewhere. The movements alerted sensitive persons around the world to the damage inflicted by the patriarchal order on women as well as men through an unjust, unequal structuring of gender identities and relations. It generated a body of scholarship as well as a host of organisations and initiatives focused on dismantling patriarchy. More recently, the gay/queer movements have alerted us to the imperative of critically engaging the complicity of patriarchy with compulsory heterosexuality as also the simplistic male/female gender duality. Recent decades have witnessed significant advances in reshaping public awareness, behavior, legal-institutional regimes and policies in the direction of gender justice. We have been seeking to involve boys and men as partners in furthering this ongoing process of transformation.

Our long-term goal is to attempt a radical reconstruction of dominant masculinities and of the political, economic and socio-cultural structures, practices and norms in which they are deeply implicated. This is undoubtedly a tall order and demands a multi-pronged strategy combining research, conscientisation, activism as well as advocacy. From our diverse efforts and work with communities we have learnt that it is difficult but not impossible to challenge and change prevalent constructs of masculinity by enlisting men from different social strata as allies in the work on gender equality. We are convinced that men have a lot to gain from interrogating

power systems that provide them with short-term privileges, but deprive them of the lasting benefits that would accrue from an equitable world.

We serve as a support base for generating and disseminating ideas and also for activist initiatives aimed at the reconstruction of masculinities to facilitate gender equality and non-violence. FEM is a process that will constantly evolve. The guiding principles of the network are inclusiveness, diversity, co-operation and democratic functioning. It will continue to facilitate mutual learning and sharing of resources and technical support, forging partnerships as well as shaping public opinion within the country and beyond.

We invite all institutions and individuals who agree with and publicly vouch for the above-mentioned principles and objectives to join this network. We would like to build bridges with those involved in movements geared to social justice and ecological sanity. We are particularly keen on collaborating with like-minded organisations or networks working on gender issues in South Asia as well as in other parts of the world.

So far we have organised a series of meetings at the national, regional and local levels to deliberate on matters of common interest and have also established rapport with several partner organisations. We have published a document that outlines a set of policies aimed at involving men in the creation of a gender-just social order in India. Many of us have been engaged in action-research on key issues such as the role of men