

Forum to Engage Men

Core Group Meeting, December 28-29, 2014

11:00am to 5:00pm

Centre for Health and Social Justice
Basement of Young Women's Hostel NO.2,
Avenue 21, G Block, Saket, New Delhi-110017

AGENDA FOR FEM MEETING

1. Welcome and introduction
2. Recap from the previous meeting's discussion and actions taken
3. Critical review of the regional symposiums and understanding the processes that have emerged during the regional symposiums.
4. Synthesis of doables from all the regions- a comprehensive agenda for 2015.
5. Modalities to implement the Agenda – responsibilities of FEM Secretariat as well as regional leaders.
6. Any other matter by permission of the chair.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Satish Kumar Singh welcomed all the members present. ICRW, HAQ-CRC, Breakthrough had also indicated their attendance. Dr. Abhijit Das will be present on phone. Rajdev Chaturvedi, Santosh, Anuradha Kapoor, Milind Chavan, Vandana Mahajan expressed inability to attend. Nasim Ansari is enroute and delayed due to fog.

Dr. Mangesh Kulkarni's name was suggested as the moderator for the meeting for the 1st day. Dr. Sanjay Srivastava's name was suggested as the moderator for the meeting for the 2nd day.

On the scope of the meeting, members reiterated that the agenda for the future must emerge from the 2 day meeting. There is need to develop a different agenda for FEM from what it has been doing in the past. After reviewing the past work and the review of the regional symposium, there is need to view the shape of FEM- will it broaden and should it emerge as a knowledge bank? What will be the mechanisms of accountability? Since FEM is a loose network, there is need to bring it into a formal structure.

RECAP FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING'S DISCUSSION AND ACTIONS TAKEN

From the recap of the actions taken, there was a need felt for a discussion on Core Group/ Working Group of FEM. Further, there was need to review the structure of the FEM website and its content. The website of FEM should have "Who We Are" on the homepage and not information of MenEngage Symposium. FEM is not the branch of MenEngage though it is associated with MenEngage. Amendments can be suggested by the members and can be collected by the Secretariat, which later could get incorporated in the website by the consensus of the core group.

It has been decided that a static info page should be created for the website which should remain on the home page. Other events can be put up on the website as a link which is a part of FEM but not FEM in itself.

Network should also work out a plan for the visibility of state networks. Questions were being raised about the identity and ownership of FEM- do all members know and accept that they are members of FEM? There is also need to discuss the criteria of Membership to FEM. MAVVA, Tathapi, Purushvachya are doing work in Maharashtra but are not in FEM core group. There is need to rework on the structure of FEM. On the issue of the membership fees, there is need to specify which account the fees will be deposited.

During the last year, CHSJ team was busy in preparation for the Global Symposium and could not devote time to FEM online platforms. However, other FEM members supported the secretariat by highlighting gaps which were corrected by the team. Further, the Secretariat has failed to follow-up on the action points from the previous meeting.

A correction was made to the minutes of the meeting on 12th December 2013; Vandana's name was to be replaced with Bimala Chandrasekhar for responsibility of regional symposium.

The interpretation of the Anti Sexual Harassment Law has not been developed and uploaded on the website. The secretariat will coordinate with JAGORI, PLE and NEN to get the ASH policy and send to FEM members. There is need to collate the work done by organizations and institutes like TISS. Further, based on this, seminars can be organized with networks like MASVAW. Madhu Mehra (PLD) can also be consulted for the same. Bimla Chandrasekhar to also provide resource material. It was suggested to prepare a note of personal experiences for the people who can be deemed as convenors of the sexual harassment committee. Secretariat can circulate the note to all the members. Anand Pawar, Poonam Kathuria and Harish Sadani can be contacted for training schedule on Sexual Harassment policy.

On the institutionalization of FEM, it was stated that FEM as a network includes organizations, individuals and networks and the organizations that are a part of those networks. What is non-negotiable for membership criteria? When the journey from Khuda Hafiz to Allah Hafiz and the journey from Jai Sia Ram to Jai Shri Ram is taking place, what will be the process of FEM? We are working with men but for what purpose? We have to think about what is the nature of the support needed by the organizations at the community level. How is the FEM process strengthening the grassroots organizations?

CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE REGIONAL SYMPOSIUM AND UNDERSTANDING THE PROCESSES THAT HAVE EMERGED DURING THE REGIONAL SYMPOSIUM

Several questions were raised by the members: What were the gains and gaps of the regional processes? In some regions the academic seminars were successful. After the Global Symposium, is their new learning, any new challenges or any key takeaways? There is need to review the symposium. Is there any new position for FEM after the Global Symposium?

FEM must review what it plans to do in the Indian subcontinent- is there need to deepen or broaden or to work on certain issues or with different strategies.

Where are the position papers that have been previously discussed? Our language is very similar to the language adopted by the right wing groups so there is need to clarify our position. Will FEM remain a network or become a knowledge production base? What will be the accountability mechanisms of FEM members? The academic seminars and regional symposia threw up issues and how will these be incorporated into the agenda of FEM? What will be role of FEM on the current social trends- the riots erupting in the country, or our opinion on Love Jihad, Joy of Kissing? What will the position of FEM on different fasts that women keep, on men who also talk about gender equality but visit temples and wear a big red vermilion (*tilak*) on their foreheads? Why has MASVAW not taken up the issue of Love Jihad? If FEM must discuss these issues what will be the platform for this discussion? Identification needs to be made about Nari mukti and Nari shakti.

It was suggested that a workshop of 10 to 15 days can be considered in our country to increase the knowledge of men and boys in India on these issues.

It was suggested that a 10 day course content should be developed for different people from different walks of life. (i.e. activists, communities, students and teachers). FEM can help and interpret the courses and contents on Masculinity for the teachers. Prominent media figures can also be incorporated in FEM's teaching programmes. Fellowship can also be considered as an option for students and young boys to help and bring a wholesome change in their understanding of men's role for gender justice. Symposium has given us some new relationships that can be used for strengthening the network and its activities. FEM should also consider 'religion' as a subject for intervention and to take a stand upon.

There is need to critically review the regional symposium. There is need to review the gains and gaps. We must acknowledge that some things took place in all the regions. After this we can start comparing the achievements in the different regions. It was an achievement to be able to do events in the North East. We must now assess how we can take this work forward.

Updates from Regional Academic Seminars- North

Young participants were keener than the older participants to actively participate on this issue. Fresh and new academicians are willing to participate and demanding for a course which can be incorporated in their course.

Aligarh Muslim University and Moradabad University were dropped out of this whole mobilization procedure therefore, it can be concluded that FEM lacks the skills to approach some of the important players. No individual was willing to participate in the Symposium on their own expense from U.P.

Understanding of LGBTQI's issues needs to be broadened to approach it from a different and more progressive lens. A lady professor from JNU suggested that the idea of men that FEM is promoting is not something which girls nowadays are looking for. Girls covet a masculine boyfriend; therefore we need to have a dialogue with female faculties as well.

Updates from Regional Academic Seminars- South

Academic seminar could not be held although it was decided that there will be a regional seminar and an academic seminar also. Padmavati University also expressed interest to host the academic seminar. However, the academic seminar was put off. Once decisions are made and are later changed, the changes must be properly communicated. Bimla suggested that a proper module of communication needs to be developed; otherwise problems like Southern regional Symposium will keep on emerging which (i.e. no proper communication which ultimately resulted in zero activity in the southern region in order to organize a regional Symposium).

Updates from Regional Academic Seminars- North East

Initiatives were not being taken properly for the seminar in Assam and several questions were being raised about it being organized in Assam and not in the other North-Eastern states.

FEM should have had a list of people to contact in the region- we did not get in touch with the women's cell in Guwahati University which has done good work for the past many years. The regional symposium in North East was also with the intention that we must go to the region, even if it is not possible to do a vast outreach. The impression now is that though the regional meeting took place, there was little clarity on the purpose of the meeting and on the issue itself. The meeting was organized by TISS and this is not seen as a local institute. This should have been called by a local university like Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development. We should have had clearer idea of the ownership, credibility and understanding of the issue of the organizing university.

Was there a problem in the planning stage? Should we have been in touch with Sanjib Baruah and Sanjoy Hazarika, Tiplut Nongbri? The planning for North East should have been done better.

Updates from Regional Academic Seminars- West

The regional process in Pune saw several activists who spoke about their innovative interventions. Two magazines- Purushvachya and Purushspandan were also represented. Forum for Dialogue with Men- Purush Samvaad Kendra run by Nari Samta Manch also participated. Some participants had a clear direction of working with men, while others were working on gender equality but not with men. They were encouraged to view masculinity also.

There is also a sense that a lot of work is going on but no concurrent research is coming out. There is no forum that brings academics and activists together on current issues. There is need to build dialogue regularly. There are a lot of articles coming out in the magazines, but are the writers being considered academicians and being called to the meeting? Is there any discussion on the metrosexual man? Can there be any discussion between the boys living in the village and the academicians in the cities? Can FEM facilitate this space?

Some members raised the issue that the participation from Gujarat in the regional symposium was limited to 4 persons and 1 from Goa. It would not be proper to call this a Western region seminar. However, this is not an evaluation of the quality of the seminar vis-a-vis its content.

This physical separation of activists and academicians is also opposed by people. There is also need to see what academicians can learn from the practitioners and what nuanced knowledge the activists need with the help of the academicians.

The entire process of planning the western region seminar was done democratically.

Comments:

Are we not saying that we utterly failed in the South and that we put up a poor show in the North East? Was this a matter of poor administration? The seminars of 3 regions took place on the same day- Banaras, Pune and Madurai. It was a problem to ensure quality, facilitators. Subhash and Mangesh went to the West region, Sanjay Srivastava and Satish went to Banaras and Ashis Biswas went to Madurai. The regions were not in communication with each other.

Day 1 culminated by deciding that there is a need to discuss the future agenda of FEM for 2015. As FEM is the 1st group of organizations to put up a research on VAW in 2004, which can be considered as an option for FEM to take forward and to work upon.

Day 2

Updates and Learning

Started with a small recap of day 1, the session was being moderated by Subhash Mendhapurkar, whereas Bimla ji gave a small update about academic seminar that was being organized in the South region (Madhurai), and it was reiterated that Southern region lacked in organizing a regional symposium.

Madurai and Pune

Bimla's update was followed by Anand Pawar's update on Pune's Regional Symposium where 140 participants turned up with an Agenda of involving young audience.

Both the above mentioned events were on the 13th October. A short film was also being developed to portray the highlights of the Regional Symposium which was held in Pune. One very important aspect of all these Symposiums was the aim to attract diversity in participation. Although the participation was vastly diverse still a need was felt of involving minorities as speakers not only as participants.

Lucknow

Mahendra gave an update about Lucknow Symposium, a variety of issues were being discussed from men's role in Gender Justice to Globalization, Media and their role in constructing and influencing masculinities. "Masculinity in itself is a burden on men" ideas and realization of this sort emerged and deliberated upon during this Symposium. A collective effort of Women groups, Men's group, artist, performers, academicians, students, politicians and journalists was being made to make all these events successful and reach out to a larger audience to bring a wholesome change in the society. Questions were being raised by the panel about "MASWA's actions and engagements for eradication of religious and communal issues". A strong need was felt and reiterated about an effort of writing knowledge products for the members of Men's groups to deepen their own understanding about the issue.

Shimla

Shimla Symposium was seen as a mundane event where participation from J&K and Haryana was very thin. Shubhash ji suggested that a need was felt to work more with the students and to make them understand a just method to intervene and to work for Gender Justice.

Kolkata

H. I. Fatmi of SPARK, Anand Pawar and Satish Singh shared their experiences and opinions about the Symposium. Some of the experiences were that it was well designed and the issue of LGBTQI was prominent in the event and ample amount of deliberation was being given to this issue. A need was felt that the transgender group was highly influenced by Hindu rituals in their discourse. A new and very important learning for the men's group was the issues and problems of "transgender". Another experience of the panel was that instead of giving a presentation on the issue, the participants were talking about the work of their own organizations which was difficult to take out any learning from. NAXALISM: Naxalites were not being engaged during this Symposium neither the issue of Naxalism was being seen from the masculinity, this was something which needs further deliberation.

Assam/ North East

The preparation time was around 15 days. The first priority was to identify key organizations from the 7 states that would be part of the process. Most organizations that participated were working on issues of human rights- on AFSPA or on conflict issues. The orientation could not be done properly; even the material that was sent to them could not be accessed by most organizations. The discussions focused on gender and the gender perspective. One challenge was that there was some inconsonance over the choice of Assam as the venue. The other states wanted Manipur or other remote states and see Assam as more progressed. Around 40 tribal groups took part in the process. The symposium covered issues of violence and there was discussion on the protest by Irom Sharmila. This was the first such programme in North East and there were several learnings to take from it. The people now want more such exchange of ideas. The participants were young. The solidarity march was also good. The cultural programmes could have been on the issue and could have covered how masculinity is projected in the cultural expressions.

An interesting issue while working in conflict areas is whether we need to work on issues of human rights or masculinity. If we do small studies/ researches on these issues, a good volume of knowledge can be generated. On another suggestion- Sikkim should also be considered as an extended 8th sister or be considered a part of Eastern UP.

The tribal communities are also living in present day realities and are accessing market forces. Any work with the community should take this in mind.

Any network requires a resource organization to support its work. Activists at the ground level also require support and clarification of ideas/ concepts and issues. Therefore, it has been decided to establish a body which can serve as a resource centre for the network.

The Following Issues:

- 1. Structure**
 - a. Core Group, Working Group
 - b. Membership criteria
 - c. Institutionalization of FEM
- 2. Communication**
 - a. Individual CVs
 - b. Listserv
- 3. Capacity Building/ Knowledge Production**
 - a. Fellowship
 - b. Course
 - c. Resource, Material collection and paper on Anti Sexual Harassment Law
- 4. Political Positions**
 - a. Juvenile Justice
 - b. Love Jihad
 - c. Article 377
- 5. Strategies for Work**
 - a. Work with TG community
 - b. Tribal masculinity/ community Governance
- 6. Confrontation with men**
- 7. Centre for critical masculinities studies** to link up local research and activism. How should the research be used? What will be the model of such a centre? Will the centre work to collate research or will it generate research? Such a centre should carry activist and research based insights from regions apart from Delhi. While the centre needs to be created, the regional processes which have been supported by FEM also need to be supported.
- 8. Nature of support to CBOs- emotional/ backlash**

Role of the Centre

- It Should work on different themes- Youth, Masculinity, Family, Religion, Sexuality, and Tribal. Apart from anthropologists and sociologists, we need to engage with political science, economics, etc, also.

- The centre should work as a resource centre and have intersectionality and not work in silos.
- It can also serve as a platform for discussion on framework for new projects, which can be taken up for further manifestation.
- Work on different Regions- masculinities in North East, etc. Regional language and generating new literature. Regional languages should have a central place. It should work as centre which can connect research and activism.
- Resource Centre should conduct workshops on a regular basis for capacity building. People can get acquainted with masculinity on an ongoing basis. It can have a yearly theme. It will clarify positions on current issues like Love Jihad, etc.

One concern is that the centre should not adopt a top down approach and give ready-made positions to people. When we question the role of MASVAW and state networks and their inability to discuss issues like Love Jihad, we have to also ask why FEM never responded to this either? Why has FEM not responded to other similar issues like Khap, Section 498, etc. Further, when we speak and our voices are heard, do we speak as FEM. We generally like to speak as individuals, organizations but not necessarily under the banner of FEM. For example: CHSJ has collected case stories of over 200 men in Maharashtra over the past 5 years. This is a deepening of the work. Our individual positions cannot be called FEM positions. The work of creating positions must be done collectively, otherwise our positions remain organizational positions. Similarly we cannot place our organizational work on the FEM website. It was not done by FEM.

Masculinity is connected with pleasure, power and production. We have not engaged with this adequately. Anthropology looks at this through sexuality and cinema, etc., but not to the extent it should be. We are not addressing the dominant groups through the lens of masculinity (Marathi Masculinity, Gujarat's Patel) and other dominant male groups are not being addressed by FEM and neither by this male movement for gender justice. Upper caste and Upper class men should be involved in FEM's framework of engagement, which is not yet worked out and manifested into a substantial outcome. Organizational and Institutional approach is required to penetrate country's male dominant structures. Reaction and response dilemma of the practitioners also needs to be addressed by FEM. A concept of ownership of FEM needs to be developed within FEM to avoid number game.

ACTION POINTS for regional members

Uttar Pradesh

- Capacity building of fresh members of MASVAW network. One criticism of MASVAW has been whether the men have really changed after joining MASVAW?
- What will the engagement with the religious minorities?
- What will be the process of media sensitization?
- Widening MASVAW to western UP
- Creation of a resource pool within the region on work with men

Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidya Pith

- Capacity building of teachers and increase of ownership and capacity.
- Need for course content has also been felt

Uttarakhand

Have participated in FEM, MASVAW but the involvement has been less in Uttarakhand. Individual participation has been there but the activities and guidance to Uttarakhand has been missing. It is a request to CHSJ and others to continue the work in Uttarakhand. It is a common saying in the hills that

the water of the hills and the youth of the hills (Pahadon ka pani and pahadon ki jawani) do not get used as resources in the hills. It is also thought that once the son finishes high school, he will be able to get a job in Delhi or the cities or in the army. All boys are expected to join the armed forces. Due to his all young boys are in the practice of rehearsing masculinity which is reflected in aggression on the field and in sports. Further, most of the boys cannot join the army and later this aggression is taken out in the panchayat. **Uttarakhand should also take two weeks and discuss their plan of action.**

Maharashtra

CHSJ partners of FEM are involved in this process. Other members of FEM mentioned in the list of members do not identify as FEM. FEM should reach out to people who are working on the issues. There is a problem in bringing people under the banner of FEM. Is there any need for FEM in Maharashtra?

All the regions in the country are not at the same level while working with men and boys. Further no structure is perfect in design. We have to think about national, regional and state level interventions. Coalition of male gender trainers must also be involved in FEM and we should do a consultation with them.

FEM will only think at the national level. It will not be involved in advocacy. It will not be a learning platform as that will require field level inputs. Learning will be incomplete if MASVAW experiences are not inbuilt.

North East

- A two day workshop is required in each of the states. Resource will be required for this. We should try to cover all 7 states + Sikkim in the next 6 months. Material in regional language is also to be developed.
- Academic sessions in at least two more central universities should be planned. There are linkages with the vice-chancellors that have been strengthened.

Gujarat

- Challenges of working with men from the perspective of women's organizations. This course/research will be useful for women's organizations
- A course or men women activists for understanding masculinities in those states where the work is limited at this time.

Structure of FEM

- Steering Committee

North East- Ashish Dey

North West- Subhash Mendhapurkar

South- Bimla and Vandana (to check)

West- Anand and Mangesh (Poonam Kathuria as outside support)

North- Mahendra and Dr. Sanjay

East- Dr.Santosh and H.I. Fatmi (Spark)

Delhi to provide guidance and supervision to the Secretariat- Sanjay Srivastava and Satish Kumar Singh

Quorum should be 50% of the members.

The Steering Committee will work for 1 year.

The meeting ended with a vote of thanks.

Key Recommendations:

- On the issue of ASH law, there is need to collate the work done by organizations and institutes like TISS. Further, based on this, seminars can be organized with networks like MASVAW. Madhu Mehra (PLD) can also be consulted for the same. Bimla Chandrasekhar to also provide resource material. It was suggested to prepare a note of personal experiences for the people who can be deemed as convenors of the sexual harassment committee. Secretariat can circulate the note to all the members. Anand Pawar, Poonam Kathuria and Harish Sadani can be contacted for training schedule on Sexual Harassment policy.
- It was suggested that a workshop of 10 to 15 days can be considered in our country to increase the knowledge of men and boys in India on current social issues.
- A small issue about JAGORI's way of conducting and organizing events in collaboration with other partner organizations was being raised and got concluded into having a discussion about this issue in the IOC meeting.
- A need was felt to discuss the issue of confronting men about their actions and perspective about the issue. It is needed that we should develop some sort of strategy to confront men.
- A strategy for engagement with the transgender groups needs to be developed.
- The Secretariat needs to collate from all members 3-4 bullet points on the nature and scope of the Centre, within 2 weeks on three key ideas- our aspirations for this work, my work and need, my analysis of the current reality. Mangesh, Sanjay on current reality and the scope of work with Men. Mahendra, Subhash and Anand on the aspirations for this work.
- MASVAW and UP partners to inform within two weeks (15th January) what support is needed to ensure the doables. There should be an OD by the next quarter for MASVAW, MAE.
- FEM should decide to hold more academic seminars in the regions where there have been demands. These opportunities must be created.
- Poonam Kathuria and Mahendra will anchor the process of the curriculum development.
- Sanjay Srivastava to anchor the work on the Centre for Critical Masculinities Studies.
- Anand to anchor the follow-up of the regional consultation
- Coordinator for the position papers will be Subhash Mendhapurkar, Satish Kumar Singh and Mahendra. The Secretariat should post such news on the Listserv and someone should respond to this. This response will be uploaded on the website.
- Membership criteria to be developed and circulated by the secretariat to the Steering Committee members.
- The membership to be assessed and reviewed twice a year.
- There was a need felt for a discussion on Core Group/ Working Group and on individual CVs uploaded on the website.
- A correction was made to the minutes of the meeting on 12th December 2013; Vandana's name was to be replaced with Bimala Chandrasekhar for responsibility of regional symposium.

Key Decisions

1. It has been decided that a static info page should be created for the website which should remain on the home page. Other events can be put up on the website as a link which is a part of FEM but not FEM in itself
2. There is also need to discuss the criteria of Membership to FEM.
3. On the issue of the membership fees, there is need to specify which account the fees will be deposited.
4. The secretariat will translate the Anti Sexual Harassment Law and send to FEM members by the end of the 1st Quarter 2015.
5. Prepare a note of personal experiences for the few members who can be deemed as conveners of the sexual harassment policy. Secretariat can circulate the note to all the members.
6. Bimla Chandrasekar to provide note on the Act and provide resource material.
7. The secretariat will write notes to institutes to send their resources.

Region wise Action points:

Uttar Pradesh

- Capacity building of fresh members of MASVAW network.
- A stand needs to be taken about the engagement with the religious minorities?
- What will be the process of media sensitization?
- Actions need to be taken for widening MASVAW to western UP
- Creation of a resource pool within the region on work with men

Uttarakhand

FEM's activities in Uttarakhand need to be scaled up CHSJ has volunteered to provide guidelines for the same.

Maharashtra

In Maharashtra FEM should reach out to people who are working on the issues. There is a problem in bringing people under the banner of FEM. Is there any need for FEM in Maharashtra? This needs to be reconsidered.

North East

- A two day workshop is required in each of the states. Resource will be required for this. We should try to cover all 7 states + Sikkim in the next 6 months. Material in regional language is also to be developed.
- Academic sessions in at least two more central universities should be planned. There are linkages with the vice-chancellors that have been strengthened.

Participants:

1. Bimla Chandrasekar, Ekta
2. Poonam Kathuria, SWATI
3. Shakti Jamdade, CHSJ
4. Anand Pawar, SAMYAK
5. Dr. Sanjay Singh, MGKVP
6. Anand Shahi, PRAYAS
7. Ashish Kumar Dey, GHAROA
8. Mahendra Kumar, MAE
9. Hussain Imam Fatmi, SPARK
10. Santosh Kushwaha, MASVAW
11. Jagdish Lal, CHSJ
12. Subhash Mendhapurkar, SUTRA
13. Sushil k. Sharma, HARD
14. Mangesh Kulkarni, Pune
15. Nasim Ansari, MASVAW
16. Shahbaz, HAQ
17. Sanjay Srivastava, JNU
18. Abhijit Das (On Phone), CHSJ
19. Satish Singh, CHSJ
20. Ravish Ahmad, CHSJ
21. Lavanya Mehra, CHSJ
22. Ahmad Faraz, CHSJ