

Case Study On The Use And Impacts Of The United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution 35/10

Accelerating efforts to eliminate violence against women and girls: engaging men and boys in preventing and responding to violence against all women and girls

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01

INTRODUCTION

The engagement of men and boys is an important component of preventing and responding to men's violence against all women and girls.

The importance of engaging men and boys to address men's violence is increasingly recognised among civil society, the United Nations (UN) and UN Member States, as evidenced by language in key UN declarations, high-level political commitments, agreed conclusions at the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), and by the implementation of campaigns aimed at increasing men's support for gender equality, such as the HeForShe campaign by UN Women. The adoption in 2017 of Resolution 35/10, Accelerating efforts to eliminate violence against women and girls: engaging men and boys in preventing and responding to violence against all women and girls, by the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), is an important milestone in the increased recognition of the need to engage men and boys.

The adoption of Resolution 35/10 is significant, in that it is a set of recommendations on the engagement of men and boys agreed by a UN intergovernmental body. The resolution appears to have influenced other subsequent UN resolutions, especially by the General Assembly. However, we argue that, despite the shortcomings we identify, it should be used more effectively by civil society for advocacy than has been the case to date.

Without claiming to cover all aspects, this case study aims to analyse the use and impact of 35/10. After a brief technical explanation of the UNHRC resolutions (I), the paper includes an overview of the history of the adoption of Resolution 35/10, and of the work with men and boys (II). It also analyses the major strengths and weaknesses of the resolution's language (III).

The paper further analyses the use and impacts of 35/10 among civil society and the UN system.

This analysis is based on a survey carried out among MenEngage Alliance¹ members and on the review of UN resolutions since the adoption of 35/10 (IV).

We make the case that the language in the resolution reflects the process of compromise common to any UN mechanism, in which Member States contest each other's political priorities and positions.

As such, Resolution 35/10 contains commitments rightly celebrated by feminist organisations, such as a focus on accountability to feminist movements.

At the same time, the language of 35/10 has a number of important limitations, some insisted upon by Member States, that should be improved upon in subsequent related resolutions and in domestic advocacy: a narrow and binaried articulation of gender,

a limited engagement with intersectionality, an insufficient focus on the structural forces that contribute to men's violence against women and girls, including the violence-inducing legacy of colonialism, total silence on the association between alcohol use and increased risk for violence, and a very limited focus on trauma as a risk factor for men's perpetration of domestic violence.

Based on research conducted with members of the MenEngage Alliance and with UN agencies, the paper also finds that, although Resolution 35/10 seems to have influenced the language in other UN documents, it has not been used to its full potential. Indeed, 35/10 appears to be largely unknown by civil society, UN agencies and Member States.

This finding is unfortunate, as it ignores the potential 35/10 offers for domestic and international advocacy aimed at increasing

Member State commitments to engage men for gender equality and against gender-based violence (GBV).

With the aim of increasing its use and impact, this paper makes recommendations to international civil society organisations for how they can better use Resolution 35/10:

- To **communicate widely around the adoption of a resolution** once it is published.
- To **reach out to local NGOs** in order to understand how a resolution can apply to the local context.
- To **reflect on how the recommendations in a resolution can be broken down and translated into concrete actions**, in particular by using OHCHR reports detailing the implementation of resolutions.

¹ MenEngage Alliance is an international network of over 700 civil society organisations across 70 countries in eight regions, who work through gender-transformative approaches to engage men and boys in gender equality. It seeks to add value to existing initiatives, by engaging men and boys along with women, girls and people with diverse gender identities, in transforming masculinities, unequal power relations and patriarchal systems (<https://menengage.org>)

02

BACKGROUND

2.1

THE UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

The UNHRC is the main intergovernmental body within the UN system responsible for “promoting universal respect for the protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction of any kind and in a fair and equal manner” (A/RES/60/251, 2006, op2).

It was established in 2006 by the UN General Assembly (UNGA) to replace the Commission on Human Rights (Freedman, 2013, p18).

² List non-exhaustive, see the full Council mandate in UNGA (2006) A/RES/60/251.

The Council is composed of 47 Member States elected by the UNGA for three-year terms, that may not be immediately re-elected after having served two consecutive terms, which prevents de facto permanent membership.

The Council’s founding resolution (A/RES/60/251) sets out its mandate and mandated activities, which include addressing situations of particular concern, drafting new human rights standards, and promoting human rights through dialogue and capacity-building of states and making recommendations² (A/RES/60/251, 2006, op5).

2.2

THE UNHRC'S RESOLUTIONS

UNGA Resolution 60/251 states that the Council shall “make recommendations with regard to the promotion and protection of human rights” (A/RES/60/251, 2006, op5(i)).

Recommendations are normally made through the adoption of “resolutions”, which represent statements of concern and relevant agreed action, and the position of the Council’s members (or the majority of them) on particular human rights issues or situations.

The Council resolutions are drafted and negotiated among States on either country-specific or thematic human rights issues. In country resolutions, the Council may call for concrete action by the government concerned.

Thematic resolutions address issues of concern to the Council, such as violence against women, and make recommendations addressed to all UN Member States and other relevant actors.

A resolution usually starts as a draft text (known as a “zero draft”) that is proposed by one or more “sponsor” governments. Those responsible for drafting will work in close consultation with delegates, ideally before the formally scheduled informal negotiations begin.

The draft text then becomes the focus of discussion and reaction among government delegations that take place outside the UNHRC’s Plenary room. Once the sponsors feel the draft resolution is ready to be put for action, it is tabled, ie submitted to the UNHRC’s Secretariat.

2.2

Other countries can show their strong commitment to the resolution by “co-sponsoring” the draft. The UNHRC then takes action on the draft, which normally happens in the last two or three days of the session.

In the greater scheme of things, an HRC resolution is the poor cousin of resolutions born in the UN General Assembly and the “never heard of” cousin to the UN Security Council.

They are soft law. However, we argue here that HRC resolutions can advance language and concepts into areas where law becomes codified into treaties and national laws, and therefore more enforceable.

Taken together over time, the thematic resolutions build a web of understanding as to how human rights intersect and inform each other, slowly building and connecting elements from treaties and conventions, not just on human rights, but on other areas of law, including on the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

Though not binding, UNHRC resolutions do have considerable political force, as they represent the formal expressions of the opinion or will of the main UN intergovernmental human rights body. As Celine Van den Rul explains in her article titled, *Why Have Resolutions of the UN General Assembly If They Are Not Legally Binding?*, “They have a symbolic impact in the way they express, formulate and crystallize the opinion of the international community, which can serve to influence the behaviour of the MS [Member States] themselves and stigmatize or formally condemn the practice of MS’s that do not conform with it.” (Van Den Rul, 2016, p3)

Civil society’s monitoring and advocacy around negotiations of resolutions, and awareness-raising about States’ negotiations and votes at the UNHRC, are crucial. The UNHRC is an intergovernmental (ie political) body, which can make progress difficult and slow to achieve, especially for issues relating to women’s rights, and even more so for rights of LGBTQI+ persons.

It is not uncommon for States to seek to weaken draft resolutions and decisions, or trade votes, about issues perceived to be “controversial”.

Weak and non-specific language contributes to the inevitable challenges in translation from resolution to concrete action on the ground. But that in itself creates an opportunity to make it “practical and effective” (ECHR) through intelligent interpretation.

HRC resolutions can advance language and concepts into areas where law becomes codified into treaties and national laws, and therefore more enforceable.

2.3

WORK WITH MEN AND BOYS FOR GENDER EQUALITY

Document efforts to engage and change men for gender equality and women's rights date back to the 1950s in former socialist countries of the Eastern Bloc (Hallama 2021), including to increase men's involvement in parenting in East Germany (Hallama 2020) and Poland (Jarska 2021).

As Messner (1997) describes in *Politics of masculinities: Men in movements*, in North America and Europe, scholarship and activism on men, masculinities, equality and violence began to emerge in the late 1960s and early 1970s, in response to calls by women's rights activists and battered women's movements for men to support their efforts. Men's consciousness-raising groups were established in the late 1960s and 1970s in solidarity with and to support women's rights organisations, by defusing men's resistance to and increasing men's support for gender equality.

Tension emerged between those arguing that patriarchy also dehumanised men and brought predictable costs in terms of health, connection and emotional wellbeing, and those who insisted on a focus on solidarity and support to women's rights activists.

There has been a steady expansion of civil society efforts to engage men. In the United States, the National Organization for Changing Men was established in 1983, and later became the National Organization of Men Against Sexism (NOMAS), which was explicitly pro-feminist, gay-affirmative and anti-racist.

Throughout the 1980s and especially the 1990s, batterer intervention programmes spread across the US (Peacock 2006).

By the late 1990s, the international development sector began to integrate a focus on work with men and boys for equality, particularly in the context of HIV and AIDS and family planning (Peacock 2005).

2.3

In 2006, the MenEngage Alliance was established to promote peer exchange, launch joint advocacy, and inform UN deliberations and Member State action on their obligations (Greig and Flood 2020, p8). MenEngage’s membership now includes over 1,000 NGOs and over 50 formally constituted MenEngage country networks in all regions of the world.

The field of critical men’s studies emerged in the mid-1980s, and has been informed by Raewyn Connell’s analysis of hegemonic masculinities, which explores how certain cultural ideals of manhood are idealised and become recognised as dominant and aspirational and, importantly, identify the social forces and institutions that legitimise the dominant version of manhood operative in a given society (Connell, 2005). While the study of masculinities has been critiqued for its neglect of other subjectivities and axes of power, including race, class, country of origin, colonial experience, and the ways in which these forces shape men’s life outcomes, opportunities and practices in profound ways (White 2000; Greig and Flood 2020), it has nonetheless inspired a rich body of scholarship that continues to gather momentum. By the mid-1990s, key UN declarations began to include language on men, masculinities and gender equality.

As a result of feminist activism, both the 1994 Cairo Declaration on Population and Development, and the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, call for Member States and civil society to engage men and boys in preventing and combatting violence against women and girls, in improving sexual and reproductive health and rights, and in advancing gender equality more broadly. Since then, many of the agreed conclusions issued by the UN CSW have included language on the importance of engaging men for gender equality, and have placed obligations on UN Member States to develop policies and plans to achieve this.

The Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR) Report A/HRC/38/24 on review of promising practices and lessons learned, which was requested by Resolution 35/10, sheds light on both the need to engage men and boys, and the rich variety of efforts under way across the world to do this. The report states, “the ultimate aim of efforts to engage men and boys is to rectify discriminatory power relations based on the subordination of women and harmful gender stereotypes, which lie at the heart of gender-based discrimination and violence against women” (A/HRC/38/24, 2018, para 5).

Therefore “changing these dynamics requires recognition that men and boys play a role not only in perpetrating such violence, but also as community members who need to support more equal power relations” (A/HRC/38/24, 2018, para 5).

In other words, OHCHR opened the interpretation in its 2018 report that states work to engage men and boys, so that men recognise the structural power imbalances, resulting from multiple intersecting hierarchies and discriminations (gendered, racial, religious, class, property, birth, nationality, etc) that cause violence, and take action to address them.

However, what do we mean by the “participation” or “engagement” of men and boys? The most obvious relates to the fact that men already hold influential positions, and can and must use them to advance gender equality, address GBV, and support the political priorities of women’s rights organisations and movements. Similarly, community and religious leaders can combat harmful practices such as child marriage, female genital mutilation and honour killings.

2.3

Men in the private sector can support women's and trade unions' claims to decent working conditions, fair pay and family-friendly working arrangements.

Changing language and approaches that remove/reduce the agency of women, such as concepts of "protection".

Sharing equal responsibilities in domestic life, can increase women and girls' participation in public life and economic activity. Furthermore, engaging men and boys can be done via promoting non-violent, respectful and equal gender relations, through education and communication at all levels of education.

All these practices are listed in the OHCHR Report A/HRC/38/24. Nevertheless, to be consistent with the feminist activism which first called for gender equality, the engagement of men and boys must respect key feminist principles, and share in the MenEngage foregrounds the importance of accountability to women's rights organisations and movements.

MenEngage defines accountability as: "the commitment and appropriate conduct that individuals and organizations working in the engaging men and boys field must have toward women's rights groups and other social justice movements.

It involves the responsibility to listen to, consult and partner equally with such groups, making sure that the work of engaging men and boys makes a real contribution to social justice and gender equality." For MenEngage, accountability is a "proactive responsibility" (MenEngage, 2018, p7).

We return to the question of accountability later in this paper, and analyse the extent to which Resolution 35/10 fosters accountable practice.

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03

HISTORY OF THE ADOPTION OF RESOLUTION 35/10

Resolution 35/10 was adopted by the UNHRC on 22 June 2017, during its 35th session (HRC35).

The resolution was sponsored by Canada and was co-sponsored by 85 other UN Member States.³

A representative of the MenEngage global secretariat interviewed for this study expressed *“that is the paradox of how patriarchy reinforces itself, once it is about men there was an unprecedented amount of governments that supported the resolution”*.

35/10 marks an important step in global efforts to engage men and boys for gender equality, and against GBV, since it is the first resolution calling upon Member States to engage men and boys in addressing and preventing violence against women and girls. Indeed, the representatives we interviewed from MenEngage stated that,

“There was a lot of government support for it and it helped advanced women’s rights, especially for the measures on sexual education which passed because it was on engaging men and boys.”

Moreover, in their opinion, *“The advancement of accountable language in the resolution has been helpful as an extra step in our push for progressing the language.”* (Note: section 3.1.1 of this study explains what is meant by “accountability” in this context.)

MenEngage explains in its case study on advocacy it co-ordinated at HRC35, that it was pleased to see that the resolution presented significant gains in language, including on the respect of women’s autonomy to make decisions over their bodies, the recognition of patriarchal attitudes and gender stereotypes as drivers of violence, and the implementation of comprehensive sexuality education (MenEngage Global Secretariat, 2017, p18).

³ For the full list of co-sponsors, see <https://www.right-docs.org/doc/a-hrc-res-35-10/>

Resolution 35/10 requested the OHCHR to produce a review of promising practices and lessons learned, existing strategies and UN and other initiatives to engage men and boys in promoting and achieving gender equality (A/HRC/RES/35/10, 2017, op13). This report was presented by the OHCHR the following year at the 38th HRC's session in 2018 (A/HRC/38/24). The report presents a detailed overview of successful strategies to engage men and boys in achieving gender equality, and on the international framework on engaging men and boys. This report is valuable, as it offers an important amount of key language around engaging men and boys. *"I found the OHCHR report very important, especially on the accountability part,"* said the MenEngage respondent. Indeed, the report elaborates on evidence and examples on the application of feminist-informed and gender-transformative approaches in the work with men and boys.

The adoption of Resolution 35/10 was actively supported by the MenEngage Alliance. The representative from MenEngage explained that, *"We did not ask the government of Canada to develop the resolution on engaging men and boys... we were working a lot with Canada before that, and we knew it had a*

lot of interest, so we just jumped on the opportunity for the advancement of the framework." In other words, MenEngage did not advocate for the adoption of such a resolution, but when it learnt about Canada's intention to sponsor one, it chose to support it. *"If this is what you are going to do, this is how it should be done for it to be valuable,"* was what MenEngage thought at the time, explained its representative. Therefore, "The Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs invited MenEngage to participate in an open civil society consultation prior to releasing a zero draft of the resolution to other Member States and the wider public." (MenEngage Global Secretariat, 2017, p6)

MenEngage explained its motivation for such advocacy: *"We realised that it was an opportunity for us to push for things that in another framework or resolution would not have been possible."* Thus, MenEngage provided a set of recommendations for "strengthening the inclusion of gender-transformative language on engaging men and boys within the resolution" (MenEngage Global Secretariat, 2017, p6), which were reinforced after Canada released the zero draft of the resolution.

MenEngage carried out consultations with the Dutch and Swedish governments, in order to further reinforce recommendations on the language. MenEngage objectives were to "ensure the inclusion of a gender-transformative framework, addressing change at all levels of society under the socio-ecological framework, while upholding our key commitment to accountability to women's rights activists and organizations, women's empowerment and gender equality" (MenEngage Global Secretariat, 2017, p7).

Moreover, MenEngage explained that, *"It was an opportunity for us to strengthen allyship and partnership with feminist organisations that were doing advocacy work with the Human Rights Council, WILPF being one of them."* During the session, MenEngage observed "widespread support from States on the inclusion of approaches geared towards engaging men and boys in gender equality" and noted "an increasingly enabling environment for the global uptake of gender transformative approaches to engaging men and boys" (MenEngage Global Secretariat, 2017, p4).

04

**ANALYSIS OF THE LANGUAGE WITHIN RESOLUTION 35/10:
STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

4.1

THE STRENGTHS OF RESOLUTION 35/10'S LANGUAGE

Resolution 35/10 contains strong language regarding the recognition of historical, institutional, societal and cultural discrimination against women and girls.

It acknowledges that the patriarchal system is a root cause of violence against women and girls, such as “historical and structural inequality in power relations between women and men” and even “misconceptions about masculinities” (A/HRC/RES/35/10, 2017, pp10 and op 9(f)).

Moreover, the Council, “*recognizes* that violence against women and girls persists in every country in the world as a pervasive violation, abuse or impairment of human rights” (UNHRC A/HRC/RES/35/10, 2017, op2).

However, the real strength in the resolution’s language is that its approach on engaging men and boys is feminist-informed, and emphasises the importance of gender equality work with men and boys being accountable to women-led movements.

4.1.1

A GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE AND FEMINIST-INFORMED APPROACH

Resolution 35/10 recommends States to engage men and boys in eliminating violence against women and girls, by focusing on advancing gender equality.

It appears that the recommendations for efforts to engage men and boys contained in the resolution are “feminist informed”, ie informed by feminist perspectives on gender inequalities as drivers of violence against women and girls. Indeed, MenEngage’s advocacy and recommendations on the resolution’s language were guided by feminist principles and practices, including “placing inequalities in privilege and power that result from patriarchy at the heart of the work with men and boys” (MenEngage, 2021, p15). A gender-equitable and feminist-informed approach is essential, as MenEngage stated that, “there is risk involved when initiatives that work with men and boys are neither feminist-informed nor gender-transformative, as they may end up reinforcing male power and privilege and ultimately harming the cause of gender equality” (MenEngage, 2021, p5).

The resolution first calls upon States to address “the root causes of gender inequality, including gender stereotypes and negative social norms, attitudes and behaviours, and socioeconomic drivers of violence, and unequal power relations such as hierarchical norms that view women and girls as subordinate to men and boys and that normalize, condone or perpetuate discrimination and violence against women and girls” (A/HRC/RES/35/10, 2017, op9(b)). The resolution adopts the feminist understanding that, in order to achieve systemic change towards gender equality, power relations, values and stereotypes attached to gender need to be challenged and transformed. “Reiterating the need... to challenge gender stereotypes and the negative social norms, attitudes and behaviours that underlie and perpetuate such violence.” (A/HRC/RES/35/10, 2017, p11)

As UNFPA, Promundo and MenEngage explained, “Gender transformative programs seek to transform gender relations through critical reflection and the questioning of individual attitudes, institutional practices and broader social norms that create and reinforce gender inequalities and vulnerabilities.”

4.1.1

The resolution calls upon States to transform “social-cultural norms and traditional and customary practices that condone violence against women and girls” through the implementation and monitoring of national policies and programmes, and the development and implementation of educational programmes and teaching materials (A/HRC/RES/35/10, 2017, op9(c) and op9(g)). It even includes a reference to “comprehensive sexuality education” (A/HRC/RES/35/10, 2017, op9(g)). Having such language in the resolution is a considerable achievement for civil society organisations that have long been advocating for similar language on sexual and reproductive health rights. Indeed, during an interview with MenEngage, it stated that, “*the language on sexual education was an incredible win*”; there’s often opposition by some States to inclusion of references to sexuality education in resolutions, which results in this language being seldom used in them.

Moreover, 35/10 calls upon States to encourage “men and boys to take responsibility and be held accountable for behaviour, including behaviour that perpetuates gender stereotypes, including misconceptions about masculinities that underlie discrimination and violence against women and girls” (A/HRC/RES/35/10, 2017, op9(f)).

The resolution seeks to achieve its stated intention via the promotion of legislation, education and individual responsibility. The resolution calls upon States to transform traditional gender roles through “holding persons in positions of authority, such as teachers, religious leaders, traditional authorities, politicians and law enforcement officials, accountable for not complying with and/or upholding laws and regulations relating to violence against women and girls” (A/HRC/RES/35/10, 2017, op10(c)).

Moreover, it encourages “group education, community outreach, mobilization and mass media campaigns and early childhood gender equality education programmes and curricula” (A/HRC/RES/35/10, 2017, op10(j)). Finally, it calls on States to engage “men and boys to recognize the societal and economic costs of violence and harassment”, establish “the cost of violence against women and girls” and to “expose the costs of inaction, including through awareness-raising activities” (A/HRC/RES/35/10, 2017, op10(i) and op10(k)).

Resolution 35/10 contains a number of recommendations with a single goal: to engage men and boys in changing traditional and stereotypical gender roles.

Considerations of the “accountability” practice

Resolution 35/10 is focused on engaging men and boys in eliminating violence against women and girls, while putting the rights and leadership of women and girls at the centre: it includes language on accountability, and calls on those involved in work with men and boys for gender equality, to be accountable to feminist and other social justice movements.

The resolution first “recognizes the critical role of women and girls as well as of women’s and youth organizations and organizations led by women and girls as agents of change” and “urges States to meaningfully engage with women and girls as active and equal participants in the planning, design, implementation and monitoring of legislation, policies and programmes, including programmes aimed at engaging men and boys” (A/HRC/RES/35/10, 2017, op5). It highlights that women’s rights organisations are essential, and puts women and girls at the centre of efforts to engage men and boys.

This approach, referred to as “accountability”, is essential in order not to shift the focus from violence against women and girls and women’s leadership in addressing these issues.

4.1.1

Moreover, the resolution encourages States to engage men and boys against violence against women and girls *alongside* and *in partnership* with women and girls. Indeed, the resolution first emphasises, in two preambular paragraphs, that men and boys should take an active part in efforts to prevent and eliminate violence against women and girls “alongside women and girls” and that they should work “jointly in partnership with women and girls at all levels” (A/HRC/RES/35/10, 2017, p18).

The resolution does not fall in a “logic of masculinist protection” (Young, 2003), where men and boys should endorse the position of protectors of women and girls.

As Otto explains in her critique of some of the language in Women, Peace and Security resolutions, “the paternalistic position of the masculine protector puts those protected... in a subordinate position of dependence and obedience but also demands loyalty and gratitude from them” (Otto, 2017, p206).

Instead, 35/10 further reinforces its accountability approach” by calling upon States, in two operative paragraphs, to “fully engage men and boys, alongside women and girls... as agents and beneficiaries of achieving gender equality” and to “encourage men and boys, alongside women and girls, to see themselves as agents and beneficiaries of the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls” (A/HRC/RES/35/10, 2017, op9(a) and op9(h)).

Furthermore, by encouraging States to engage men and boys in eliminating violence against women and girls, the Resolution attempts to move the focus from men and boys’ interest, to that of trying to ensure the interests of women and girls are the end game. This is specifically stated: States must ensure that all efforts in engaging men and boys “are designed and promoted with the aim of ensuring that the concerns of women and girls, their rights, their empowerment, their safety and their equal and meaningful participation in decision-making at all levels are prioritized” (A/HRC/RES/35/10, 2017, op10(a)).

This is an attempt to reach accountability, because, as stated by the Coalition of Feminists for Social Change (COFEM), “without accountability, the danger that men are in charge persists; in this case, of women’s rights and well-being, which further undermines women and girls’ agency, voice and leadership, thereby reproducing the very inequality that violence against women and girls work is attempting to shift” (COFEM 2018, p2).

In that respect, the language contained in Resolution 35/10 advances a gender-transformative and feminist-informed approach, while calling for gender equality work with men and boys to be accountable to intersectional feminist principles.

4.2

THE WEAKNESSES OF RESOLUTION 35/10'S LANGUAGE

This is a resolution of the HRC. Clearly it should seek to place the necessity of addressing violence against women in the context of broader human rights. It misses that opportunity.

While 35/10 contains many important feminist commitments, it lacks some key understanding and considerations. The resolution adopts a cis⁵ and binary⁶ vision of gender. Moreover, the resolution does not take into account the full range of discrimination that women and girls can suffer from, and does not address the notion of intersectionality.

Finally, it fails to adopt a comprehensive strategy, to engage men and boys in eliminating violence against women and girls, as it focuses on interpersonal behaviours, while ignoring the structural drivers of violence.

With this said, it is important is to acknowledge that the language within the resolution had to survive debates and negotiations among States, some fiercely opposed to the very idea of gender, let alone transforming gender norms.

⁵ Cisgender: person who identify with the sex/gender they are assigned at birth.

⁶ Binary vision of gender: identifies the spectrum of gender as being either male or female.

⁷ Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex.

Critique:

A cis and binary vision of gender

As far as gender analysis is concerned, Resolution 35/10 adopts a cis and binary vision of gender, and thus of men, boys, women and girls.

Firstly, the resolution refers to “women and girls” and “men and boys”, without ever defining gender and the diversity that it includes. It fails to mention LGBTQI+⁷ individuals and especially transwomen, queer, intersex, non-binary people. As the resolution is about ending violence against women and girls, clearly LGBTQI+ individuals should be explicitly included. It is well known that the discrimination and violence that the LGBTQI+ community suffers from, is profoundly related to patriarchal gender norms. As the GAGE report notes, “Gender-based discrimination and gender-based violence, and homophobic and transphobic violence are closely interlinked, and unless both are tackled systematically, neither one will be eradicated completely.” (Walker, Engle and Beckert 2019, p6)

4.2

Thus, by failing to define “gender” and not mentioning LGBTQI+ individuals, 35/10 adopts a very narrow understanding of women, and reinforces the binary vision of gender.

Instead of the resolution’s stated intention of the “need to challenge gender stereotypes”, and that it “strongly condemns... gender-based violence”, and mentions “gender equality” on multiple occasions, the terms “gender” and “women” are used interchangeably, in this context.

As Terrell Carver states, “In many contexts one finds that a reference to gender is a reference to women, as if men, males and masculinities were all unproblematic in that regard – or perhaps simply nothing to do with gender at all... Why map gender onto sex as one-to-one, just when the term was helping to make visible the ambiguities of sexuality, orientation, choice and change that have been undercover for centuries?” (Carver, 1996, p.5) Resolution 35/10 misses out on gender diversity beyond the male and female binary.

Report A/HRC/38/24, submitted pursuant to Resolution 35/10, does address the needs of LGBTQI+ individuals.

The report recommends to States, national human rights institutions and civil society organisations, that they should “invest in efforts that engage men, boys, women, girls and non-binary persons... to promote non-violent, equal and inclusive relationships that are also inclusive of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons” (A/HRC/38/24, 2018, para 48(a)). Furthermore, the report recognises as a good strategy the promotion of “full respect for the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women, girls, men, boys and non-binary persons” (A/HRC/38/24, 2018, para 47(d)). The listing of women, girls, men, boys and non-binary persons in both recommendations is in stark contrast with the binary vision of 35/10. The language of the report demonstrates clear gender diversity, and even highlights the links between violence against women and girls and violence against LGBTQI+ individuals. Indeed, in paragraph 13, the report states that “Violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons, including against non-binary persons, and violence against women and girls share common root causes” (A/HRC/38/24, 2018, para 13).

It further recognises that “violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons also hinders efforts to eliminate violence against women” (A/HRC/38/24, 2018, para 13). While inclusive, it still is lacking in the “how”.

We read a list, which makes it necessary for an identity to be claimed. That is important, but it can never be exhaustive.

The better argument is to ensure that there is constant emphasis on human rights: inalienable, indivisible and universal. We never know how many identities will ultimately be on our list, and so must avoid a list save as to remind that law cannot discriminate.

If there is a new initiative for a new resolution on engaging men and boys in the future, it is imperative that it reflect the analysis and recommendations of the OHCHR report and use inclusive language to overcome the cis and binary vision of gender, and locate the protection of rights in the totality of HR protection and respect.

4.2.1

A NON-INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH

Resolution 35/10 lacks an intersectional lens.

The term “intersectionality” was coined in 1989 by Black feminist activist and academic, Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw. It refers to “particular forms of intersecting oppressions, for example, intersections of race and gender, or of sexuality and nation” (Hill Collins 1990, p18).

As the UN Working Group on Women and Human Rights explained:

“An intersectional approach to analyzing the disempowerment of marginalized women attempts to capture the consequences of the interaction between two or more forms of subordination. It addresses the manner in which racism, patriarchy, class oppression and other discriminatory systems create inequalities that structure the relative positions of women, races, ethnicities, classes,

and the like. Moreover, intersectionality addresses the way that specific acts and policies operate together to create further disempowerment.

For instance, race, ethnicity, gender, or class, are often seen as separate spheres of experience which determine social, economic and political dynamics of oppression.

But, in fact, the systems often overlap and cross over each other, creating complex intersections at which two, or three or more of these axis may meet. Indeed, racially subordinated women are often positioned in the space where racism or xenophobia, class and gender meet. They are consequently subject to injury by the heavy flow of traffic traveling along all these roads.” (United Nations Working Group on Women and Human Rights, 2001, p.2)

4.2.1

Resolution 35/10 only refers to “intersectionality” once. Indeed, the resolution critically lacks consideration of this approach, as it only mentions intersectionality in a preambular paragraph: “Recognizing the particular risk of violence faced by all women and girls who suffer multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, and stressing the urgent need to address all forms of violence and discrimination against them” (A/HRC/RES/35/10, 2017, p12).

However, in its recommendations to States, it does not refer to the multiple forms of discrimination that women and girls can face. There is no mention of racism, homophobia or poverty for instance, which are clearly very relevant. Indeed, the OHCHR report distinctly refers in one of its recommendations to the concept of intersectionality.

“Pay due attention to the intersection of discrimination and discriminatory stereotypes based on gender and other grounds, such as race, economic and social status, sexual orientation and gender identity, disability, and cultural and religious background.” (A/HRC/RES/35/10, 2017, op48(c))

As the resolution is about engaging men and boys, the concept of intersectionality should be addressed in this regard as well. The lack of focus on men’s intersectional lives in Resolution 35/10 is consistent with other language in UN commitments on GBV and health and human rights issues. Stemple et al point to the limitations of this approach, and write, “human rights language that treats men only as holders of privilege misses men who, like many women, are disempowered by intersecting forms of discrimination (race, ethnicity, nationality, class, sexuality, disability, and so on” (Stemple et al, 2016).

Tal Peretz writes, “Men’s intersecting racial, class, gendered, sexual, and religious identities shape the ways they interact with feminist/anti-violence work, as well as the possibilities for engaging them.” (Peretz, 2017, p.527) Taken together, Stemple et al and Peretz remind us that a focus on men’s intersectional identities, and their experiences of marginalisation and oppression in human rights language, creates opportunities for States and civil society to mobilise men’s and boys’ solidarities with women and people of all gender identities.

“Men” is after all not a homogenous social category. Men and boys themselves can be subjected to violence due to patriarchal attitudes and other types of discrimination. It is therefore essential to understand “men and boys” as heterogeneous group with diverse identities and experiences.

4.2.2

A LACK OF FOCUS ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COLONIALISM AND VIOLENCE

Kopano Ratele draws attention to an important and often neglected force shaping intersectional disadvantage: colonialism.

In his article, An invitation to decoloniality in work on (African) men and masculinities, he writes, “whereas colonialism reconfigured men’s lives and masculinities, it has tended to be peripheral in the global work on men and masculinity”. (Ratele, 2020, p.1)

He explains that “colonialism transformed existing masculinities and racialised gender relations, reorganizing positions of supremacy and subservience along colonial racist difference”. (Ratele, 2020, p.1) Indeed, a recent study by Brown et al analysing rates of GBV in societies that endured colonialism, found that “countries which were colonised are 50 times more likely to have a high prevalence of intimate-partner violence against women” (Mannell, 2022; Brown et al, 2022, p17).

Brown et al point to the kind of language that could have been included in Resolution 35/10 and should inform work done to prevent men’s violence. “Violence within communities can only be addressed when the violence directed against communities (eg structural forms of violence including racism, extractive industries etc) is also tackled.” (Brown et al, 2022, p.22) They call for intimate partner violence (IPV) interventions that address contextual drivers and structural forms of violence such as “interventions targeting historical trauma and racism as a driver of IPV perpetration” and point to the potential of “work on indigenous approaches to violence prevention”. (Brown et al, 2022, p.22) They also call for an emphasis on decolonising approaches to violence against women related research and intervention development to find “localised solutions to the global problem of IPV” (Brown et al, 2022, p23).

A future resolution on engaging men and boys, must include an intersectional and decolonial approach regarding violence against women and girls, and the engagement of men and boys.

4.2.3

AN INSUFFICIENT FOCUS ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC DRIVERS OF MEN'S VIOLENCE

A further issue that arises, is that Resolution 35/10 is overly focused on transforming interpersonal behaviours and relationships, while ignoring the other multiple factors that contribute to violence against women and girls.

Throughout the resolution, the HRC insists on eliminating violence against women and girls by addressing harmful attitudes, values and behaviours.

The Council calls upon States to “encourage and bring changes in the attitudes and behaviour of perpetrators of violence against women and girls” (A/HRC/RES/35/10, 2017, op10(e)). The resolution focuses on individual behaviours, and misses the opportunity to call on States to address other external factors that contribute to violence against women and girls. For instance, in three recommendations, Resolution 35/10 calls upon States to promote and encourage the development of “respectful relationships” (A/HRC/RES/35/10, 2017, op9(f), op9(g) and op9(h)).

Also, 35/10 calls upon States to support men and boys “to be positive role models for gender equality” and “to take responsibility and be held accountable for [their] behaviour” (A/HRC/RES/35/10, 2017, op9(f)). Insisting on changing interpersonal relationships and behaviours is a good approach, however, it is imperative that external factors of violence are addressed alongside.

In their recent review of the evidence of what drives men’s violence against women and girls, Gibbs et al convey the importance of going beyond a narrow focus on social norms to also address upstream or structural drivers of men’s violence:

“Underpinning IPV are three structural factors: first, gender inequality in the form of patriarchal privilege and the disempowerment of women, second the normalization, and acceptability, of violence in social relationships, and third poverty. These structural factors individually, and synergistically, drive men’s perpetration of IPV and increase women’s risk of experiencing IPV. They also impact on ‘individual-level factors, increasing the risk of poor mental health, substance misuse, poor communication and

4.2.3

relationship conflict, and childhood abuse and neglect, which in turn also fuel IPV.” (Gibbs et al, 2020, p.2)

UN Women reiterated this point. “Tackling significant barriers such as poverty, discrimination, insecure housing, and lack of access to education, employment and health care is a necessary component of doing work on violence against women and girls.” (UN Women, 2019, p.12)

Put simply, these are basic economic, social and cultural rights and their progressive realisation without discrimination is absolutely vital if violence is to be addressed. The absence of such protections are inherently linked to “the root causes of gender inequality, including... socioeconomic drivers of violence” which the resolution mentions, but without a further deep explanation of what those drivers are or how to address them (A/HRC/RES/35/10, 2017, op9(b)).

Cross-referencing the Convention on Economic, Social, Cultural Rights, and the general comments of the committee in interpretation, would give more useful and specific guidance as to how to address this.

The World Health Organization lists as risk factors for IPV, lower levels of education and low levels of women’s access to paid employment, substance use or marital disruption. (World Health Organisation, 2021) Moreover, women aged 15 to 24 are most at risk of police-reported violence (Sinha, 2013, p54). According to the same report, individuals who lived in “a neighbourhood with at least one indicator of social disorder were more likely to be victim of spousal violence” (Sinha, 2013, p65).

Therefore, to engage efficiently men and boys in eliminating violence against women and girls, these socio-economic drivers must be addressed. Although the Human Rights Council recommends States ensure the promotion and protection of the human rights of all women, especially regarding their sexual and reproductive health, it does not address and define other structural drivers directly (A/HRC/RES/35/10, 2017, op9(d)). The “socioeconomic drivers of violence” should be explicitly defined and addressed in future resolutions.

The accompanying 2018 report (A/RES/72/148, 2018) points us in the right direction with this recommendation:

“Take a comprehensive, multilevel, multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder approach to transform discriminatory gender norms and relations. This means that relevant efforts should be made at multiple levels, in the home, in the community, in local and national institutions and through legal and policy frameworks and coordinated across various sectors, including education, health, social protection, law enforcement and justice systems.”

(A/RES/72/148, 2018)

4.2.4

AN INSUFFICIENT FOCUS ON TRAUMA AS A MAJOR DRIVER OF MEN'S VIOLENCE

Decades of research show that the strongest predictor of a man's use of violence against a partner, is his exposure to violence in the home as a child, all the more so if he both witnesses violence against his mother and experiences child abuse himself (El Feki, Heilman and Barker 2017; Fulu et al 2017; Promundo and Sonke Gender Justice 2018), with the risk of perpetration highest among men who experienced physical abuse or sexual abuse in childhood, particularly for those who experienced both physical and sexual abuse (Fulu et al 2017).

Gibbs et al explain the relationship between childhood exposure and subsequent use of violence. "There are likely two pathways through which childhood trauma drives IPV: the social learning of violence, and the impacts

on children's brain development and later personality, particularly co-morbid poor mental health and harmful substance use." (Gibbs et al, 2020).

Resolution 35/10 acknowledges this research in the following paragraph: "*Recognizing also* that those who are exposed to or experience violence in childhood are at increased risk of becoming perpetrators of violence against women and girls, and therefore recognizing the need to prevent and eliminate violence against women and children in order to help to stop the intergenerational cycle of violence." However, it never returns to this insight in the recommendations it makes.

05

ANALYSIS OF RESOLUTION 35/10 IMPACTS AND USE

5.1

THE IMPACTS OF RESOLUTION 35/10 IN THE UN SYSTEM

To analyse the impacts of Resolution 35/10 in the UN system, we attempted to interview representatives of different UN entities, but were unsuccessful in each case.

Nevertheless, some impacts of 35/10 can be inferred by looking at the language in UN documents. 35/10 has not yet been directly cited or expressly referred to in any UN documents. The only UN document that refers indirectly to Resolution 35/10 is the OHCHR Report 40/31 on, Realisation of the right to work, because it refers to the OHCHR Report 38/24. Indeed, during the interview with UN Women, one of the respondents shared that, “We have not referred to the resolution in a formal way, however we use the content of the resolution in various forms: in project documents, concept notes and in our discussions.”

Therefore, even if Resolution 35/10 is not directly cited in UN documents, we can still analyse whether, since its adoption, there are more references to “engaging men and boys” in UN resolutions on violence against women and girls.

⁸ A/HRC/RES/47/5; A/HRC/RES/44/17; A/HRC/RES/38/1.

Regarding resolutions adopted by the UNHRC, before 2017 it seems that only one resolution on violence against women and girls mentioned “engaging men and boys”. Indeed, 2016 Resolution 32/19 on, Accelerating efforts to eliminate violence against women: preventing and responding to violence against women and girls, including indigenous women and girls, calls upon States to take actions by: “engaging, educating, encouraging and supporting men and boys to take responsibility for their behaviour and to become active partners in the prevention and elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against all women and girls” (A/HRC/RES/35/10, 2017, op7(e)). However, since the adoption of Resolution 35/10, the Council adopted three resolutions on violence against women and girls, that include recommendations to engage men and boys.⁸

This can be explained by the fact that in negotiations, it can be easier to include paragraphs, sentences or expressions that are part of previously adopted resolutions (ie what is referred to as “agreed language”), especially if they are taken from a resolution that has been adopted by consensus.

5.1

For instance, Resolution 47/5 on “the realisation of the equal enjoyment of the right to education by every girl” and Resolution 44/17 on “the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and girls”; both call upon States “to promote long-term awareness-raising initiatives in education, in communities in the media and online, engaging men and boys, through the incorporation of curricula on all women’s and girls’ rights into teacher training courses, on topics including the root causes of gender-based discrimination” (A/HRC/RES/44/17, 2020, op4(e); A/HRC/RES/47/5, 2020, op8).

As far as resolutions adopted by the UN General Assembly are concerned, before June 2017 there was only one resolution that referred to “engaging men and boys” (A/RES/70/266, 2016, op61(d)), compared to 15 resolutions after June 2017.⁹

Furthermore, it seems that Resolution 35/10 may have influenced subsequent UNGA resolutions on violence against women and girls. For instance, in three resolutions on the “improvement of the situation of women and girls in rural areas” the UNGA urges Member States to fully “[engage] men and boys, including community leaders, as strategic partners

and allies in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls and eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against them, including by working to counteract attitudes by which women and girls are regarded as subordinate to men and boys” (A/RES/72/148, 2018, op2 (l); A/RES/74/126, 2020, op2 (p); A/RES/76/140, 2022, op2 (p)).

Moreover, in two resolutions on “the intensification of efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls”, the UNGA urges Member States to “[engage] men and boys in challenging gender stereotypes and negative social norms, attitudes and behaviours that underlie and perpetuate such violence and in developing and implementing measures that reinforce non-violent actions, attitudes and values” (A/RES/73/148, 2019, op8 (c); A/RES/75/161, 2020, op6 (h)).

Finally, the formula “engaging men and boys as agents and beneficiaries of change and as strategic partners and allies” has been used in four UNGA resolutions addressing gender inequality since 2017: on, Follow-up to the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family and beyond, in 2020 and recently in 2022, on, Child, early and forced marriage, and on, Addressing the challenges of persons living

with a rare disease and their families (A/RES/74/124, 2020, op6; A/RES/73/153, 2019, op15; A/RES/76/132, 2022, op 12; A/RES/76/139, 2022, op9).

Furthermore, looking at language in resolutions adopted by the UN Security Council which, unlike UNGA and UNHRC resolutions, can be legally binding for Member States, before June 2017, the Security Council explicitly referred to the importance engaging men and boys in three resolutions, but none since then.¹⁰ However, since then, the Security Council has not mentioned “engaging men and boys” in any resolution regarding violence against women and girls.

Finally, reviewing General Recommendations from the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee), the body of independent experts that monitors implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), we see that before 2017, one General Recommendation from the CEDAW Committee, which was issued jointly with the Committee on the Rights of the Child, mentioned the engagement of men and boys.

⁹ A/RES/72/148; A/RES/72/147; A/RES/73/153; A/RES/73/148; A/RES/74/128; A/RES/74/126; A/RES/74/124; A/RES/75/161; A/RES/75/167; A/RES/75/153; A/RES/75/284; A/RES/76/132; A/RES/76/139; A/RES/76/142; A/RES/76/140.

¹⁰ In Resolution 2106 of 2013, the Security Council recognises that “the enlistment of men and boys in the effort to combat all forms of violence against women is central to long-term efforts to prevent sexual violence in armed conflict and post-conflict situations” (S/RES/2106, 2013, p5). Moreover, in Resolution 2242 of 2015, the Security Council reaffirmed the importance of the “engagement by men and boys as partners in promoting women’s participation in the prevention and resolution of armed conflict, peacebuilding and post-conflict situations” (S/RES/2242, 2015, p12).

5.1

“The Committees recommend that the States parties to the Conventions: Engage men and boys in creating an enabling environment that supports the empowerment of women and girls.” (CEDAW/C/GC/31-CRC/C/GC/18, 2014, para 69 (f))

After 2017, only one more General Recommendation mentioned engaging men and boys. Nevertheless, it can be observed that the language has progressed, as it includes similar language as Resolution 35/10:

“In accordance with the Convention and general recommendation No. 35, States parties should: Adopt long-term policies and strategies to address the root causes of gender-based violence against women in situations of disaster, including by engaging with men and boys, the media, traditional and religious leaders and educational institutions, in order to identify and eliminate social and cultural stereotypes concerning the status of women.” (CEDAW/C/GC/37, 2018, para 57 (f))

Nevertheless, although Resolution 35/10 has not been directly quoted by any UN documents, it can be noticed that its language has been re-used in several resolutions from the UNHRC, the UNGA and from the CEDAW Committee, and that the reference to “engaging men and boys” in issues relating to women and girls has increased since the adoption of Resolution 35/10.

It can be said that, within the UN system, the resolution has not had any direct outcome apart from the production of OHCHR Report 38/24. For instance, the establishment of a monitoring and reporting mechanism, or a National Action Plan for the engagement of men and boys in eliminating or preventing violence against women and girls, could have been a potential efficient direct outcome.

However, the resolution definitely encouraged the UN to further consider the need to engage men and boys in addressing the root causes of GBV.

5.2

THE USE OF RESOLUTION 35/10 BY CIVIL SOCIETY

Resolutions adopted by the HRC are valuable for civil society organisations working on preventing violence against all women and girls and the engagement of men and boys, as they provide leverage for advocacy work with governments and stakeholders.

For instance, Resolution 35/10 can be used in advocacy activities, to demonstrate that an agreed language on engaging men and boys in preventing violence against women and girls exists at the international level.

Consequently, because resolutions have considerable political force, they come alive when they are used by civil society to lobby governments to ensure that they meet their international commitments. Thus, to analyse the impacts of 35/10, it is essential to measure its use by civil society organisations in their daily work on preventing and eliminating violence against women and girls.

To analyse the use of Resolution 35/10, we conducted a survey among MenEngage Alliance members, utilising the alliance's listserv to circulate the survey. Of the nine respondents, five knew about 35/10 and four indicated that they had used it in their daily work without directly referring to it. It would appear that MenEngage members, at least the small number that responded to our query, are unaware of 35/10, or for those who know about it, it is never really used directly as leverage for advocacy by civil society organisations. Indeed, during an interview with UN Women staff working on addressing violence against women and girls, one respondent on the UN Women team indicated that, *"HRC Resolution 35/10 is definitely not well known. We only use it for internal documents and meetings with colleagues at UN Women."*

Another representative from UN Women stated, "I have not seen this resolution referenced anywhere at UN Women regarding violence against women and girls... I don't know if it is not referenced because no-one is aware of the resolution, or because people are not comfortable to reference it."

5.2

Indeed, several reasons can be given as to why Resolution 35/10 is not used by civil society. Firstly, the most obvious reason is that 35/10 is unknown to public and civil society organisations. This may be due to the fact that civil society organisations are not familiar with the UN human rights system and HRC resolutions in general. Indeed, there is an issue about general interest, knowledge and access of UNHRC thematic resolutions by civil society organisations. Nevertheless, regarding 35/10, it appears that more effort could have been made by organisations attempting to engage men and boys and advocating for this approach, to educate their constituencies about the resolution and how it could be used. In an interview with MenEngage, it explained that, *“We did continue to keep the momentum going, especially during a year after the resolution towards the development of the OHCHR report mandated by the Resolution.”* For instance, it developed a follow-up brief that highlighted the key points of the resolution, and was involved in a follow-up session of the HRC with Member States. It also developed four policy briefs for a meeting convened with the CEDAW Committee. Moreover, representatives from MenEngage explained that, *“In all efforts and advocacy resolutions that we input towards, we have used Resolution 35/10 as the central normative framework.”*

For instance, for the 63rd session of the CSW a draft was released with more than 20 references to “engaging men and boys”; MenEngage explained that, *“We suggested the collapse of all those superficial references to one nuanced paragraph where we centralised all the key language of Resolution 35/10, in particular the roles and responsibilities and for men to be accountable.”*

Nevertheless, despite all these efforts to use and communicate around the adoption of the resolution, it was not sufficient, as most civil society organisations working on gender issues did not know about Resolution 35/10. For instance, Sonke Gender Justice Network, which supported the adoption of the resolution alongside MenEngage, released a statement for the 66th Session of the CSW (E/CN.6/2022/NGO/113). In this statement, the organisation called for accountability in work with men and boys on climate and gender justice and states. *“We therefore advocate for efforts to engage men and boys that: seek to critically reflect on and transform social norms and institutional practices that create and reinforce gender inequalities.”* (E/CN.6/2022/NGO/113, 2021, p3) Similar language can be found in Resolution 35/10, but the organisation did not refer to it, although CSW could be a great platform to communicate around the existence of Resolution 35/10.

Furthermore, we noticed during our survey that organisations that do use Resolution 35/10 language, do not explicitly refer to it in their work. As a representative from MenEngage Africa stated during an interview,¹¹ *“In our day-to-day engagement we have not necessarily made use of it, quoted it, and used it as a tool... We do not quote the resolution, but we are mindful of the language that it presents.”* They continued by explaining that, *“We conduct work that is aligned with the recommendations that are in 35/10”* such as *“engaging with traditional and religious leaders to end female genital mutilation or child marriage, to address harmful practices within their communities”*. However, by not referencing the resolution and not using it as leverage by stating it, this contributes to reinforcing the lack of awareness around the resolution.

Another possible explanation as to why the resolution is not used by civil society organisations, could be because they do not find HRC resolutions useful in advocacy work at country level. As the representatives from MenEngage stated in an interview conducted for this paper, *“Regional advocacy is so complex, and what is even more complex is going from global into the regional mechanism and how the global is translated into the regional mechanism, which is a key bottleneck into national action plan or further action at national level.”*

¹¹ Interview with MenEngage Africa staff conducted on 15 April 2021 by Dean Peacock and Charlotte Jones.

5.2

Indeed, the language contained in HRC resolutions can be quite general and global, and can sometimes appear detached from the reality on the ground, and therefore seem unusable for advocacy work at national or regional level.

For instance, Resolution 35/10 calls upon States to take action by “engaging, educating, encouraging and supporting men and boys to be positive role models for gender equality and to promote respectful relationships, to refrain from and condemn all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls, to take responsibility and be held accountable for behaviour” (A/HRC/RES/35/10, 2017, op9(f)). This recommendation is quite general and at first glance may seem difficult to apply at local level. However, it could be translated into concrete action at local level for civil society organisations. For example, civil society organisations could advocate to government and local stakeholders for education programmes at school, or for group discussions in the communities, about gender discrimination and stereotypes.

It could educate men and boys on values attached to violent masculinities that are harmful to the whole community, and the benefits of adopting a gender-equitable attitudes.

Moreover, OHCHR Report A/HRC/38/24 mandated by 35/10 contains detailed recommendations for Member States that are directly applicable. For instance, the report recommends “[promoting] equal sharing of responsibilities in unpaid care and domestic work, including through parental leave policies and increased flexibility in working arrangements” (A/HRC/38/24, 2018, para 47 (c)).

Civil society organisations can use such recommendations in their advocacy with governments, to push for parental leave for men policies, for instance.

06

RECOMMENDATIONS ON HOW RESOLUTIONS CAN LEAD TO OPTIMAL USE AND IMPACT

What emerges from the analysis of the use and impact of Resolution 35/10, is that it is largely unknown, poorly used and not referenced in other UN documents.

No academic analysis of the resolution has yet been done, no-one has really tackled this text despite its international scope. For instance, when one does an open search on the resolution on the net, there are not many results. This is a clear indicator of the lack of communication around the adoption of the resolution. What should be done in the future to ensure that such a resolution can be used by civil society organisations and lead to concrete impact?

Firstly, it is imperative to **communicate widely around the adoption of a resolution** once it is published. During our interview with representatives from UN Women, one respondent said, *"We learned about the resolution during the MenEngage Symposium."* It shows how communication and discussions sessions around the subject are fundamental.

To do so, civil society organisations should start quoting the resolution and the OHCHR report recommendations in submissions to the Committee. They might also conduct additional activities with key stakeholders such as the CSW, UN Women and the CEDAW Committee. Moreover, civil society organisations can draw attention to the resolution and its use during side events of the HRC, including reference to the resolution in submissions to the Universal Periodic Review, especially if the countries on which those submissions are made were co-sponsors of Resolution 35/10. Furthermore, civil society organisations should raise awareness on the resolution directly to the public via media, newspapers and through holding consultations in every region of any relevant Member States, especially sponsors and co-sponsor States.

Finally, civil society organisations should do some capacity building as to how to use UN soft law to push for change at the national level. The goal is to raise awareness around the implication of the resolution and on how to use it in advocacy work.

Secondly, it is important to **reach out to local NGOs in order to understand how a resolution can apply to the regional and local context.**

Indeed, the main issue in advocacy work around resolutions lies in the gap between the international instrument and its application in the regional and local contexts. As the representatives from MenEngage stated in an interview conducted for this paper, *“The normative framework should be built upon the local realities, because the disconnect is often quite strong.”* It is indeed difficult for local NGOs to relate to international instruments, as they are sometimes highly disconnected from the reality on the ground. *“To have the sophistication and capacity to effortlessly flow between national, to regional, to global, in the way that advances a cohesive advocacy effort is really complex.”* Hence, civil society organisations should consult local NGOs during the negotiation process, before the adoption of a resolution to gather their recommendations. For instance, for Resolution 35/10, MenEngage explained that, *“We engaged with the advocacy working group, which is representative of all regions, there is a focal point of every regional network.*

It is the main strategic body where all the technical gathering process takes place.” Such working group gatherings should take place with every civil society organisation that is involved in the negotiations of a resolution.

Thirdly, it is essential to **reflect on how the recommendations in a resolution can be broken down and translated into concrete actions.** Indeed, recommendations in a resolution are general and global, in order to be adapted to different local contexts. Therefore, it is important to break down each recommendation, and reflect on how it can be applied concretely. It will allow civil society organisations to advocate to governments and other stakeholders for concrete actions base on the resolution framework. For instance, in Resolution 35/10, the Council calls upon States to “fully engage men and boys, alongside women and girls, including community and religious leaders, as agents and beneficiaries of achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls as a contribution to the elimination of violence against women and girls” (A/HRC/RES/35/10, 2017, op9(a)). This general recommendation could be dismantled in different concrete actions, such as religious leaders adopting a discourse

condemning harmful practices such as child marriage, female genital mutilation and honour-related killings during their religious service in their communities. Moreover, it is crucial that civil society organisations use **OHCHR reports detailing the implementation of resolutions,** such as the OHCHR Report A/HRC/38/24, which already gives promising practices and detailed recommendations that Member States can apply. For instance, in order to break the cycle of violence, the report recommends “rehabilitation of perpetrators of gender-based violence to prevent reoffending and support for men and boys who have witnessed and suffered from violence, in addition to support for women and girls who have been exposed to and experienced such violence” (A/HRC/38/24, 2018, para 47 (e)). Such detailed recommendations can be easily translated into concrete actions, such as the development of rehabilitation centres for offenders, and the establishment of support groups and centres for victims.

Finally, in order to achieve concrete policy change, civil society organisations could do a mapping, to identify what kinds of policies and laws could be influenced, based on the recommendations made in the resolution and in the OHCHR report.

07

CONCLUSION

The UNHRC Resolution 35/10 establishes agreed language on the engagement of men and boys.

This language is valuable as it is gender-transformative, informed by some feminist values and principles, and accountable, and can also help advance further women's rights. It calls upon Member States to engage men and boys in changing traditional and stereotypical gender roles, while making men and boys' engagement in this change accountable. The resolution's recommendation to include "comprehensive sexuality education" in school programmes and curricula is particularly progressive.

However, Resolution 35/10 lacks an inclusive and non-binary vision of gender, and it should have included a focus on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons.

The resolution's language also lacks an intersectional lens, and it should have built its recommendations on the understanding of the different types of discrimination faced by women and girls, boys and men. The resolution does not sufficiently address the root causes of violence, as it aims to change only interpersonal relationships and fails to consider the structural drivers of GBV. If an initiative for a new resolution were to come about, these shortcomings

would need to be addressed, so that the engagement of men and boys in preventing and responding to violence against women and girls has a better chance at being effective. Nevertheless, Resolution 35/10 has the important benefit of being in place, and should be used further by civil society as an advocacy tool. The survey and interviews we conducted among civil society, show the lack of use and communication around the adoption of the resolution.

Civil society organisations and activists on the ground do not use Resolution 35/10 because it is largely unknown. It has, therefore, a low impact on the international community, Member States and UN documents. Indeed, it is precisely by using 35/10 as leverage with stakeholders, that civil society will give 35/10 stronger political force.

When international institutions and States fail to implement their international commitments, civil society's task is to hold them accountable. Here lies the very role of civil society: working upstream, by ensuring that the resolution reflects as much as possible the local context and needs, and working downstream, by communicating widely about the adoption of the resolution and advocating for its practical implementation by linking it to other commitments or obligations to pressure States to apply it.

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