

## Summary Report: Leveraging Positive Masculinities for Green, Inclusive and Resilient Communities in the post COVID-19 Recovery Agenda



**ARFSD 2022**

Building forward better: A green, inclusive and resilient Africa poised to achieve the 2030 Agenda and the Agenda 2063

3-5 March 2022 | Kigali, Rwanda

**Side event on leveraging positive masculinities for green, inclusive and resilient communities in the post COVID-19 recovery agenda**

**Virtual event**  
**28 February 2022**  
**9.00 AM - 10.30 AM (GMT+2)**



Join on: <https://bit.ly/PositiveMasculinities>

### Moderator



**Robert Kasenene**  
 AUC Regional Spotlight Initiative Coordination and FGM Policy and Advocacy Specialist

### Conveners



**Beatrice Mutali**,  
 Deputy Regional Director for UNFPA East and Southern Africa



**Ms. Adekemi Ndieli**  
 Country Representative a.i. UN Women Uganda

### Panelists



**Mme Bineta Diop**  
 Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the AU Commission on Women, Peace and Security



**Natsnet Chebrebrhan**  
 VAW Prevention Coordinator Raising Voices,



**Bruce Sakindi**  
 Youth Chair Rwanda Men Engage Network



**Ulemu Kusapali**  
 Head of Programs Malawi Interfaith AIDS Association



**Beatrice Maina**  
 Post-Doctoral Research Scientist African Population and Health Research Center

### Overview:

The COVID-19 pandemic has elevated the visibility of gender-based inequalities and exacerbated women and girls' experiences of gender-based violence in its various forms, pulling back critical progress made on the SDGs. Patriarchy, toxic masculinities, and harmful social norms are at the core of these inequalities, which are visible in all spaces and structures within society.

The challenges of these harmful norms are recognized in the dual agenda for the African continent: the Sustainable Development Goals and the Agenda 2063, both of which call for a transformative approach which leaves no one behind. The need to address the root causes of violence against women, harness the power of all people across gender identities, and dismantle unequal power structures in society has been reaffirmed in national, regional and global commitments. It has been an area of investment under the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative in Africa and a focus in the November 2021 African Union Commission Men's Conference on Positive Masculinity.

Toward moving from commitments to action, with the roadmap elaborated in the 2021 Generation Equality Gender-Based Violence Action Coalition and 2019 International Conference on Population and Development Nairobi ICPD25 Commitments, UN Women and UNFPA in East and Southern Africa collaborated to convene a critical dialogue on efforts and progress to promote positive masculinities in support of a green, inclusive and resilient recovery across the continent as a virtual regional side event during the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development.

The virtual dialogue on 28 February 2022 convened a diverse group of 50 stakeholders representing government institutions, civil society, including women's rights and faith-based organizations, as well as UN agencies. It offered an opportunity to bring expert perspectives on working with men and boys across a spectrum of entry points for advancing a more sustainable and inclusive recovery from COVID-19 and identified key areas of priority actions for all partners to consider within their own organizations and as part of broader efforts to transform power across the continent.

## Summary of Discussions

### **Opening Remarks:**

**Beatrice Mutali, Deputy Regional Director, UNFPA East and Southern Africa Regional Office.** Ms. Mutali opened with UNFPA's commitment to supporting ongoing efforts on the continent, including the implementation of the Kinshasa Declaration. *"Evidence shows men and boys are the main perpetrators of VAWG – it is critical to engage them meaningfully, promoting gender-equitable norms, behaviours and attitudes starting at a very young age. What we see and what we hear shape us."* Ms. Mutali noted that men and boys' engagement is one of the priority areas of UNFPA's new strategic plan and regional programme for 2022-2025. She expressed UNFPA's readiness to strengthen their partnership with the African Union, UN sister agencies - especially UN Women, civil society organizations, women's rights organizations, youth networks and traditional leaders to promote positive masculinity as one of the strategies to end VAWG and achieve SDG 5 and wished the participants a successful dialogue.

### **Talk Show:**

#### **Discussants**

- **Mme. Bineta Diop**, AU Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security.
- **Mme. Chantal Yelu Mulop**, Special Adviser to the President of the Democratic Republic of Congo on Gender-Based Violence
- **Bruce Sakindi**, Youth Chair, Rwanda Men Engage Network
- **Natsnet Ghebrehan**, Prevention Coordinator Raising Voices, Uganda
- **Ulemu Kusapali**, Head of Programs at Malawi Interfaith AIDS Association (MIAA)
- **Beatrice Maina**, African Health and Population Research Center

**Mme. Bineta Diop, AU Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security.** Mme Diop spoke of the role of the African Union and the office of the Special Envoy to promote positive masculinity on the continent. She highlighted that accountability is a core mandate of the Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security and is supported by a continental results framework. She spoke of the need to focus efforts on prevention and provision of survivor-centered services (justice, medical, psychological, and reparation in one place), that gives women and girls access in one place. She also noted the need for investing more on data generation and management systems at all levels. Mme Diop recalled that through the Kinshasa Declaration and commitment from the Men's Conference on positive masculinities to develop an African Union Convention on ending violence against women and girls, the continental legal framework will help to end VAWG. Mme Diop recommended the need for an ecosystem that allows champions to emerge, beginning with African leaders. She called for the 10 Heads of State Champions from Kinshasa to engage in the discourse of positive masculinity and bring the 54 member states to rally around this work, bringing the youth voice, traditional and religious leaders, private sector, researchers, and a chance for every actor.

**Mme. Chantal Yelu Mulop:** Special Adviser to the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on GBV. Mme Mulop reflected on the leadership of the DRC as the AU Chair last year in organizing the 1st continental conference on Positive Masculinity and shared some of the developments resulting from the Conference. She noted that prior to the 25 November Men's Conference, the country launched a campaign on zero tolerance against GBV in June 2021, which mobilized men across generations to reverse the trend of GBV. Working through collaboration with the President, Mme. Mulop noted the mandate to ensure their society is free of violence against women, and its role in the integral development of society.

**Bruce Sakindi, Youth Chair, Rwanda Men Engage Network (RMEN).** Mr. Sakindi spoke to the results of the Ubuntu Symposium in 2021 and noted the importance to collaborate more from the local/organizational level to a regional and continental level. Through the Symposium, the East Africa Community, members of RMEN and other organizations participated in a regional working group which became an East African Youth network. Considering the actions needed to get more young men to be advocates for gender equality. Mr. Sakindi emphasized that 'we can no longer lay dormant in conversation' and that for men 'to join this movement means a radical self-transformation, stemming from the disruption of those base conversations that 'embody' what masculinity is and disengaging those attachments whilst empowering men with vulnerability. Toxic masculinity shies away from vulnerability and vulnerability is the most empowering force to self-development. He pointed to the importance of having empathy to listen to people who are not as privileged as many are and 'allowing women to tell us men what we do that is disenfranchising them and for us, being willing to listen'.

**Natsnet Ghebrebrhan, Prevention Coordinator, Raising Voices, Uganda.** Speaking to the work of Raising Voices in engaging boys and men in its community mobilization to end violence against women and girls, Ms. Ghebrebrhan noted Raising Voices' intentional approach to engage all individuals for effective community mobilization. She shared the approach of identifying and supporting diverse male and female activists from the community to reach and lead the transformation process with people in their respective communities, noting how this is more effective and considers the power relations among men and women. Ms. Ghebrebrhan explained that Raising Voices speaks to 'Power', rather than masculinity, since power imbalance is the root cause of VAW and also speaks about 'Privilege'. As a women's rights organization, she was asked how organizations working to promote positive masculinities can ensure their work remains accountable to women and girls and recommended for organizations to inform their policies and programmes by the experiences, voices, priorities, and needs of women and girls and ensure women and girls are at the center of work. She noted the need to consult with women's groups, women in the community, or broader national, regional and global women's networks, keeping conversations/dialogues honest with deep listening.

**Mr. Ulemu Kusapali, Head of Programs at Malawi Interfaith Aids Association (MIAA).** Mr. Kusapali reflected on key elements to support faith leaders to transform their own attitudes and beliefs, recalling the challenge of faith leaders accepting their role in entrenched GBV. Considering that most violence happens in marriage, homes, families, he noted how cultural understanding of what defines a man is learned in childhood via caregivers and religion, since religious leaders are community opinion and behavior shapers on masculinity. Highlighting how each faith group interprets their doctrines differently, Mr. Kusapali shared the experience of working across groups to learn interpretation of scriptures to positively influence teachings in churches and mosques. They also created programmes and guidelines for religious leaders to have content and materials to institute discussions within the faith community. He noted MIAA's role to challenge misconceptions of gender and their work to introduce 'power balance' according to the scriptures. For the future, Mr. Kusapali recommended institutionalizing positive

masculinity as a teaching within the faith community, with guidelines and a policy for faith communities to adopt as a reference and to avoid different interpretations. He also recommended intensifying knowledge-sharing since religious institutions change when influenced by other religious groups.

**Ms. Beatrice Maina, African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC).** Ms. Maina shared findings from a scoping study by APHRC with their consortium partners under the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative on social norms that perpetuate VAWG and health practices in Africa. She noted how VAWG is perpetrated through the inequitable socio-cultural and gender norms, including gender roles and beliefs about women's status in the society as well as the expectations of how women and girls should act, shaped by patriarchy and unequal power dynamics. She highlighted how women who act in roles perceived to be for men are seen to challenge men and norms around masculinity, which makes them vulnerable to violence. Through APHRC's consultations with organizations and networks working to engage men and boys, Ms. Maina pointed to the need for addressing the policy and programme gaps around VAWG, emphasized that interventions on male engagement need to go beyond focusing on individuals and encompass structural and systemic factors that propagate/reinforce VAWG and such interventions need to be initiated at an early age when behavior is being learned or formed.

**Closing Remarks and Next Steps: Adekemi Ndieli, UN Women Uganda Representative, a.i.** Ms. Ndieli reaffirmed that UN Women's country, regional and global presence will work in collaboration with individual advocates, including feminist advocates, faith-based organizations, traditional leaders, youth organizations, regional bodies and sister agencies to take forward the recommendation's emerging from the conversations. This will grow investments in support of gender equality, co-create space for documenting and sharing evidence, and work to transform patriarchal structures in the spaces and platforms where UN Women sits, with accountability and solidarity with women's rights organizations and women's movements. She called all actors to ensure that work in male involvement and in positive masculinities 1) advances women and girls' leadership for EVAW; 2) ensures efforts are responsive to the demands and guidance of diverse women and girls and 3) recognizes the significance and centrality of women's movement in this agenda. She emphasized the importance of men transforming their own behaviors, ensuring funding decisions do not inadvertently reproduce gender imbalances or fail to transform patriarchy. Ms. Ndieli closed by recalling UN Women's commitment to do the internal and external work required to bring about change, to expand partnerships to make progress and improve accountability to women's rights groups and to leaving no one behind.

## **References**

- [Link](https://youtu.be/W7vSRtz5U0g) to Recording: <https://youtu.be/W7vSRtz5U0g>
- [Link](#) to Video "She is a Girl" by Napo Masheane
- Press Release from the Event: <https://africa.unwomen.org/en/stories/press-release/2022/02/promoting-positive-masculinities-for-centering-an-inclusive-covid-19-recovery>
- Link to Social Media: [UN Women Africa on Twitter: "Join @UN Women ESARO & @UNFPA ESARO for a Virtual Side Event Leveraging Positive Masculinities for Green, Inclusive and Resilient Communities, in advance of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development. !\[\]\(cdf2842d82858164c68c92720a337fb9\_img.jpg\) <https://t.co/Zexnx05RS9> | #ARFSD2022 <https://t.co/x0FNnuefof>" /](#)