

Men, Masculinities & Climate Justice

A Joint Webinar by NORMA: International Journal for Masculinity Studies & MenEngage Alliance, 26 Feb 2026

*“Ecomen doesn’t just use the entry point of helping women or simply planting trees—it also **challenges male power and privilege**. What privilege am I gaining, what right am I gaining from society? It’s not just about individual behavioural change; it’s also about individual, structural and systemic change. Positive masculinity without politics? No. Politics too. **Pro-care, justice, and anti-patriarchal**. Climate action without justice, without gender justice, without racial justice? Ecomen says: climate justice and rights for people and nature.”*

— Sohanur Rahman | Executive Coordinator, YouthNet Global, Bangladesh

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Overview

Climate change is about addressing human rights and justice. It is deeply shaped by patriarchal systems, colonial legacies, and masculinized industrial power. Solving it requires transforming not only infrastructure and policy, but the values, norms, and behaviors associated with dominant masculinity. And critically, care of people, of planet, of each other is the way.

This document is a narrative recap of the first in a three-part webinar series bringing together scholars and practitioners to explore the connections between masculinities, gender justice, and the climate crisis. The session was convened by the MenEngage Alliance Climate Justice Working Group and the editors of NORMA: International Journal for Masculinity Studies, who have produced a [double special issue on this topic](#).

Over 150 participants joined from across the globe—Bangladesh, Japan, Sweden, Uganda, Colombia, South Africa, Spain, Albania, Lesotho, Belgium, Canada, the US, and more—reflecting the truly international reach and interest of this conversation. The session featured academic presentations from the NORMA editors, a grassroots case study from Bangladesh, and a policy framework from the MenEngage Alliance, followed by rich audience Q&A.

Part 1: What the Research Tells Us

Jeff Hearn: The Big Picture

Jeff Hearn, whose research spans critical studies on men, gender power relations, violence, and transnational processes, opened with the blunt assessment that at a global, aggregate level, men tend to have a larger carbon footprint, less pro-environment attitudes, less support for green policy, and dominate the industries—petrochemicals, meat, military, transport—that are disproportionately responsible for environmental harm.

“Men tend to have a bigger impact in terms of carbon footprint and environmental impact generally—in terms of consumption, travel, transport, particularly tourism. And those industries—meat, military, petrochemicals—tend to be dominated very much by men, both in the leadership and the ownership.”

— Jeff Hearn, NORMA Editor

Hearn noted that environmental issues were part of the early men’s movement in the UK in the late 1970s and 80s, alongside socialist, green, and anarchist politics but those threads were somehow lost over the following decades as men’s activism concentrated on health, education, and anti-violence work. The climate crisis has now forced these “big issues” back onto the agenda.

He also offered a sharp political observation: the links between climate denial, right-wing politics, and petrochemical industries are highly visible on one side of the debate. Building something equivalent which is pro-care, pro-environment masculinity on the other side requires a different kind of politics, one that can enter the mainstream beyond activist circles.

Martin Hultman: Three Masculinities, One Crisis

Martin Hultman, a sociologist specializing in science, technology, and climate, organized the special issue’s intellectual landscape around three distinct formations of masculinity in relation to the environment:

1. **Industrial Breadwinner Masculinity:** Climate denial, extractivism, domination of nature. This form actively resists change and underpins much of the political backlash to climate action.
2. **Eco-Modern Masculinity:** Techno-fixes and engineering solutions, without challenging the underlying logic of domination and extraction. It looks progressive but doesn’t transform the system.
3. **Ecological Masculinity:** A caring, ecofeminist-informed approach that reconnects men to ecosystems and fosters responsibility toward people and planet alike.

“We are entering a period in which we are living through the effects of a hotter world and biodiversity loss. Masculinity studies has a crucial contribution to make — critically analyzing the norms connected to patriarchal and extractive industries, but at the same time looking into those who can actually change their practices and values.”

— Martin Hultman, NORMA Editor

Hultman shared an example of engaged scholarship: the “[Flow Feelers](#)” project in Sweden, where a group of men studied ecofeminist texts together and gathered six times in different nature environments within a city, including exploring a culverted brook. The process, he noted, helped them understand how they themselves were “culverted” in their masculinity, and began to unpack what reconnection to ecosystems might mean personally.

Tamara Shefer: Entangled Injustices

Tamara Shefer, a professor of Women’s and Gender Studies at the University of the Western Cape, brought a Global South and decolonial feminist perspective. She emphasized that the special issue was deliberately designed to center Global South scholarship which is a priority that reflects how research engines and publishing norms typically underrepresent Southern knowledge.

Shefer introduced the Blue Humanities and hydrofeminism as theoretical frameworks for understanding the climate crisis: these bodies of work challenge the human exceptionalism and nature/culture binaries that underpin both patriarchy and extractive capitalism. As she put it, we are all bodies of water — we share a hydro-commons that is being contaminated and disrupted.

“Patriarchy, coloniality, and global capitalism really intersect with a set of logics that are based on a set of binaries—the idea that humans are something other than other species and the planet. The feminist and ecofeminist project has long been thinking about that.”

— Tamara Shefer, NORMA Editor

From the South African context, Shefer noted that there is still significant resistance to environmental framing in societies confronting urgent human crises like HIV, gender-based violence, and poverty. The challenge and opportunity is to show how these are not separate struggles: climate disasters always hit the already-disadvantaged worst, and the logics that drive environmental harm are the same logics that drive social inequality.

“I think we can’t look at these issues separately. Not only at a philosophical level are they linked, but also because climate crises and environmental disasters always impact, as Jeff mentioned, worse on those already disadvantaged.”

— Tamara Shefer, NORMA Editor

Q&A Highlights: Research Session

From the audience, [Michael Kaufman](#), a researcher and activist working for gender justice for decades, raised the foundational question of whether patriarchy—understood as men’s domination over women, over other men, and over nature—inevitably produces environmental degradation. Can we mobilize men’s contradictory relationship to patriarchy in support of climate action?

Jeff Hearn acknowledged the tensions: organizing around men’s issues risks hijacking feminist movements or hardening masculinist politics. What’s needed, he suggested, is a different kind of integration into mainstream politics where care for the environment becomes as obvious as men’s health has gradually become. Martin Hultman pointed to the Swedish organization Men for Gender Equality’s “Men in the Climate Crisis” campaign, and the grassroots ‘Rebel Dads’ movement, as early experiments in that direction.

[Andrew Rothery from Green Futures](#) asked: where is the connection between this research and government decision-making? Martin Hultman and Tamara Shefer both noted that changing individual behavior without changing laws, infrastructure, and institutions is insufficient. The institutions themselves are patriarchal, which means that they are not just dominated by men, but shaped by masculine norms of leadership and engagement that anyone regardless of their gender, sex, race, etc. can embody and practice.

“We need to think about masculinities in their structures. If we only zoom in on individual change, we’re going to lose out on connecting it to the bigger picture. We need to change environmental laws, workplaces, infrastructures all simultaneously.”

— Martin Hultman, NORMA Editor

David Pharis, another audience member, raised research on nature-connectedness and how embodied engagement with natural spaces affects people’s sense of responsibility. Martin Hultman referenced the Flow Feelers project as a possibility of this work. Whereas Tamara Shefer spoke about work in South Africa on wild sea swimming and freediving, and how immersive engagement with the ocean creates effective emotional connections that open people to environmental responsibility.

Part 2: What the Work Looks Like on the Ground

Sohanur Rahman: EcoMen Bangladesh

Sohanur Rahman, a climate justice activist from Bangladesh and survivor of the 2007 super-cyclone Sidr, offered what many in the chat described as the most grounding part of the session: a concrete example of gender-transformative climate work.

When the MenEngage Climate Justice Working Group visited the European Parliament in 2024, a Member of the European Parliament asked them directly: “You have a lot of concepts and research, but do you have any practical examples?” Rahman’s EcoMen initiative is the answer.

“The climate crisis is not just an environmental challenge. It’s a social challenge, deeply shaped by power, norms, privilege, and masculinity. In Bangladesh, we see how patriarchal systems influence who makes decisions, whose voice is heard, and how resources are used. Without addressing these norms, our climate solutions remain incomplete.”

— Sohanur Rahman, YouthNet Global / MenEngage Climate Justice Working Group

EcoMen worked with young men and young women across four districts in Bangladesh across three in coastal areas near the Sundarbans mangrove forest, and one on a northern sandbar island. The program challenged traditional gender roles such as the exclusive expectation that women collect drinking water and perform household tasks while simultaneously building environmental stewardship. Feminist leadership was central to the design.

Rahman shared a particularly striking story: the “[Tiger Widows](#)” of the Sundarbans. As climate-driven salinity increases and cyclones intensify, men are pushed deeper into tiger territory to fish, leading to increasing tiger attacks. When men die, the stigma is placed on their wives who are called “husband-eaters” and excluded from community services. EcoMen addressed this through listening campaigns, community dialogue, and murals, engaging men as part of the solution rather than leaving women to bear both the loss and the blame.

Rahman was clear about what EcoMen is and is not:

- Not a men’s empowerment program. It is a program that supports everyone, with feminist leadership at the center.
- Not just individual behavior change. It targets individual, structural, and systemic change simultaneously.
- Not “positive masculinity without politics.” It is explicitly pro-care, pro-justice, and anti-patriarchal.
- Not men as passive victims or lone perpetrators. Men as shaped by and responsible within the system.

“Climate crisis is accelerating, and it is the right time to hold powerful men accountable and protect our environment and nature.”

— Sohanur Rahman, YouthNet Global / MenEngage Climate Justice Working Group

laxman belbase: The Framework — “[Care Is Not Only the Goal, It’s the Way](#)”

laxman belbase, Global Co-Director of MenEngage Global, presented the theoretical and political framing of the Alliance’s submission to the NORMA journal. The article is grounded in consultations with approximately 40 members of MenEngage Alliance and structured interviews with 15 members across the alliance.

“Climate justice, or the climate crisis, is one of the most urgent global challenges we are facing today. It is an issue of survival of humanity and of everything on the planet. The impact of whatever happens in any part of the world has consequences for everyone else. It is a collective justice issue.”

— laxman belbase, MenEngage Global Secretariat

The article’s central argument is that climate change is deeply rooted in patriarchal, colonial resource extraction and capitalist models of industrial production. These same systems organize power in ways that exclude women, gender-diverse people, and many men and boys, while exploiting nature. Engaging men and boys is therefore not a matter of goodwill, rather it is a structural necessity.

laxman pushed against the dominant frame of “allyship.” The idea that men engage in this work as a favor to others. Instead, he argued, men and boys must be understood as beneficiaries of gender and climate justice themselves. And if they are beneficiaries, they cannot remain passive. They must step in, step up, take appropriate responsibility, and support feminist leadership.

“If we are seeing climate justice as benefiting men as well, then we are not only helping others, we are benefiting from a just system ourselves. Boys and men can’t just be passive beneficiaries. They need to step in, step up, take on appropriate responsibility, accountably, and act as agents of change alongside feminist leadership.”

— laxman belbase, MenEngage Global Secretariat

He also issued a challenge to technocratic framings of climate solutions that training people in certain positions is not enough. What is required is transforming hearts and minds by building genuine ownership and commitment, not compliance. And this work must reach across the life cycle, from boys to men in positions of political power. MenEngage is developing a methodological framework specifically for working with men in political power to confront the patriarchal structures embedded in policy.

Q&A Highlights: MenEngage Session

Sari Kamiyama asked laxman about the most common positionality she observes in men's engagement work. He noted that many men still experience this work as something done for others, not for themselves, which is an issue of framing. The "power with" concept (shared power) is still emerging against a dominant frame of "giving power away."

A question from an audience member, Amy Marshall, asked how educators and curriculum developers should handle gender dynamics in learning spaces without reinforcing binary thinking or making students feel targeted. Sohanur Rahman answered from his practice in Bangladesh, where even the word "transformation" triggers transphobia-based anxiety, so EcoMen had to redesign its language entirely, highlighting the need for contextualization. laxman added that gender-neutral language, while well-intentioned, can sometimes rigidify stereotypes, and that clarity about meaning, of understanding gender as a spectrum, as something that affects everyone, is more important than terminological caution.

Landon Kenney, [Sexual Assault Support Centre](#), also asked what are some examples of the relationship between masculinity and climate change? Jeff Hearn replied that since men tend to have a disproportionate environmental impact, through consumption patterns, travel, tourism, and meat eating, and are less likely, on average, to hold pro-environment attitudes or support green policies. Certain industries that drive the climate crisis, including meat production, petrochemicals, and the military, are overwhelmingly male-dominated in their leadership, ownership, and control, and carry well-documented links to right-wing politics and climate denial. At the same time, the relationship runs in both directions. Patriarchal masculinities are part of what drives the climate crisis, but the climate crisis is also reshaping what masculinity means. As livelihoods are disrupted, as the role of "provider and protector" becomes harder to sustain, traditional masculine norms come under pressure. This connects to a wider web of issues: gender-based violence, militarization, health, and economic insecurity. These are not separate problems, but they are an interconnected system, and they need to be understood as such.

Additionally, laxman added that MenEngage is currently developing a methodological framework specifically for engaging men in positions of political power, to work toward transforming the patriarchal systems and policy frameworks that govern so many unjust structures, and to close the loop between individual behavior change and systemic transformation.

Andi Rabiaj, [Youth Voice Organization](#), Albania, asked another question about how can we better promote climate, gender, and economic justice in an integrated way, with a focus on youth at national and local levels? To which the speakers responded that the key word is integrated: these three agendas (climate, gender, economic) are symptoms of the same underlying systems of power, and treating them as separate programs undermines all three.

Sohanur, stepping in, explained how at the local level, the EcoMen model from Bangladesh offers a practical example where they start from what communities already care about, such as livelihoods, water, land, safety, and use those entry points to surface both environmental and gender dynamics together. Circling back to his earlier comments he clarified that feminist leadership must be central, not added on. Young men are more likely to engage when they understand themselves as beneficiaries of change, not just allies doing something for others.

At the national level, the work needs to connect grassroots experience to policy. This means supporting youth advocates (like those in YouthNet Bangladesh, who helped secure a parliamentary declaration of climate emergency) to carry their lived knowledge into formal spaces and ensuring national climate plans explicitly account for gender and economic justice, not as afterthoughts but as structural requirements.

Across both levels, the practical guidance is that we must build from care outward. When young people, including young men, are given genuine space to articulate their dreams and fears, they naturally raise care issues (for the environment, for relationships, for future generations). The work is creating conditions where that care can be expressed, and used to hold those in political levels of power accountable for both human rights and environmental rights violations.

Alexandra Lux, another audience member, asked whether practitioners should focus on making environmentalism feel more agentic to attract men, or on shifting what masculinity can look like. Ixman's responded that these are not either/or choices. Caring for oneself, caring for others, and caring for the planet are not disconnected, but they are deeply entangled. The pedagogical challenge is building that understanding progressively, not presenting it as a given.

Jeff Hearn added that much of the conversation centers on youth education, but the men who actually control the levers of economic and political power are adults. There is a need, however difficult to imagine, for education that reaches those men too.

"When it comes down to it, there are a lot of adult men and older men who actually control the levers of power. There is a need for education of those men who are controlling these systems. This might sound utopian but this is not to neglect youth education. That goes without saying. But it is really important."

— Jeff Hearn, NORMA Editor

Jan Reynders, member of the Climate Justice Working Group, offered an observation that when you give young men a genuine listening ear and invite them to speak about their dreams, they readily bring up care for the climate, for children, for relationships but they also describe how hard it is to practice that care in a world that doesn't support it.

How Speakers Described the Session

Asked at the close to sum up the session in a single word or phrase, the speakers offered:

Jeff Hearn: Long-term commitment. And non-human-centeredness.

Martin Hultman: Careful. Full of care, and aware of the details.

Tamara Shefer: Inspired. Hearing what people are doing on the ground brought the theoretical inputs alive, and there is clearly a way forward.

Sohanur Rahman: Action. Evidence of eco-friendly transformation.

Iaxman belbase: Hopeful. There are more questions than answers, which is exactly why.

Voices from the Audience

Participants in the chat added more context and questions that reflect the breadth of this global conversation, below are a few:

“The theory of masculinity and its connection to the environment made me rethink the way I do advocacy.”

— Md. Seyam Sikder, YouthNet Global, Bangladesh

“Great insights. These can be extended to other issues, on the connections between masculinities, systemic challenges, the experiences of men and boys, and the need to center care. Men and boys as beneficiaries means they can’t be passive, but that they need to be active agents of change.”

— Joni v/d Sand, MenEngage Global Secretariat

“My key takeaway: how can we enable this evolving body of work to be interpreted at the grassroots in our local communities?”

— Andrew Rothery, Green Futures, UK

“‘Nibi bimaadiziwin’ is an Anishinaabek phrase that translates to ‘water is life’ and speaks to its relationship to our life cycles and connections?”

— Landon Kenney, Canada

“Climate crisis is rooted in patriarchal masculinities, but at the same time the realities of climate crisis are also shaping notions around masculinity — which further has connections with violence, militarization, health, and economy. It is important to look at these as interconnected systems rather than separate.”

— Iaxman belbase, MenEngage Global Secretariat (chat)

Speaker's Bio

Sari Kamiyama (she/her)

[MenEngage Alliance Climate Justice Working Group]

Born in 2000, Sari Kamiyama is a feminist researcher and activist focusing on masculinities in Japan and beyond. She is currently a master's student at Waseda University Graduate School in Tokyo, Japan. She is the founder of the International Men and Masculinities Studies Society (IMSS) in Tokyo and an individual member of the MenEngage Alliance. Within MenEngage, she co-authored the academic article "*Care is not only the goal, it's the way*": Working with men and boys for climate and gender justice for NORMA: International Journal for Masculinity Studies as part of the Climate Justice Working Group. She has also co-created the comic '[Are \(All\) Boys Really Like That?](#)' as an illustrator with the Youth Reference Group, exploring masculinities in the digital age.

Jeff Hearn (he/him)

[NORMA editor]

Jeff Hearn is a Senior Professor in Human Geography at Örebro University, Sweden; Professor of Sociology, University of Huddersfield, UK; Emeritus Professor, Hanken School of Economics, Finland; and Extraordinary Professor, Women's and Gender Studies, University of Western Cape, South Africa. His research focuses on critical studies on men and masculinities, gendered power relations, organisations and work, violence, transnational processes, ICTs, ageing, and social change from feminist and intersectional perspectives. Jeff is a long-standing contributor to NORMA: International Journal for Masculinity Studies, including co-editing a recent special issue on men, masculinities, and the (m)Anthropocene. His work bridges academic research, policy engagement, and activist scholarship on gender justice and social sustainability.

Martin Hultman (he/him)

[NORMA editor]

Martin Hultman is a professor of sociology with a specialization in science and technology studies (STS).

For the past twenty years, he has researched, taught and participated in the societal debate primarily in four areas: energy, climate, environmental legislation and economics. Within these, he has zoomed in on climate obstruction, gender, masculinities, the Rights of Nature, as well as ecopreneurship and the circular economy. His interdisciplinary contemporary and historical research deals with human existence on earth together with other creatures. The research asks questions such as: How can we shape just and caring societies within the planetary boundaries of the earth? Among Hultman's books we find: *Climate Obstruction* (2022); *Att ställa frågan - Att våga omställning* (2021); *Naturens rättigheter* (2019); *Ecological Masculinities* (2018).

Tamara Shefer (she/her)

[NORMA editor]

Tamara Shefer is Professor of Women's and Gender Studies in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at the University of the Western Cape, Cape Town.. Her scholarship has foregrounded the study of gender and sexualities within postcolonial, decolonial, transnational feminist and critical masculinities thinking, with particular emphasis on young people. She is currently engaged with re-conceptualising

academic knowledge with emphasis on embodied, affective, feminist, decolonial pedagogies and research, including collaborations across art and activism and hydrofeminist thinking with oceans and water. Recent edited volumes include: Reimagining social justice scholarship: (2026); Decolonial feminisms, decolonising feminisms (2026); Hydrofeminist thinking with ocean/s: (2024) and the Routledge Handbook of Global Feminisms and Gender Studies (Torres, Pinto, Shefer & Hearn, 2025). She was also editor on the 2020 Routledge Handbook of Masculinity Studies, and more recently co-editor on this special edition being launched.

laxman belbase (name only)

[MenEngage Alliance Global Secretariat/Climate Justice Working Group]

laxman is a social worker and gender justice activist from Nepal with over two decades of experience in gender equality, social justice, and human rights advocacy. laxman is currently engaged with MenEngage Alliance, where he contributes to global efforts to engage men and boys in advancing gender equality, promoting LGBTIQ rights, climate justice, and child rights. laxman previously helped establish MenEngage Nepal and served as MenEngage South Asia Coordinator (2009–2013).

Before joining MenEngage globally, laxman was Global Gender & Health Advisor at Save the Children Sweden, supporting gender equality policy development, program guidance, and capacity building across international offices. laxman has provided technical assistance to NGOs, UN agencies, and governments across multiple regions.

Laxman also serves as part-time faculty at the Elliott School of International Affairs, George Washington University, teaching “Masculinities in International Affairs,” while remaining active in global gender justice networks and advocacy initiatives.

Sohanur Rahman (he/him)

[MenEngage Alliance Climate Justice Working Group]

Sohanur Rahman is a climate justice activist and youth advocate from Bangladesh, working at the intersection of environmental sustainability, social justice, and youth empowerment in a context of restricted civic space. A survivor of the 2007 super-cyclone Sidr, he became committed early on to supporting vulnerable communities affected by climate-induced disasters.

In 2016, he founded YouthNet for Climate Justice, an initiative focused on raising climate awareness among young people and strengthening youth engagement in climate advocacy. Under his leadership, YouthNet has contributed to national climate policy debates, including a campaign that helped the Parliament of Bangladesh declare the climate crisis a planetary emergency in 2019, and advocacy efforts that supported the halt of several planned coal power plants. Rahman is also a 2024 Young Activist Summit Laureate, recognized for his leadership in advancing climate justice and youth-led social change.

Khurram (he/him)

[MenEngage Alliance Global Secretariat/Climate Justice Working Group]

Khurram is a poet. As an artist-academic he enjoys working in community-focused projects and his interests lie at the intersection of disability studies, environmentalism, and decolonial practices. He has a deep-seated fondness for manga & anime.

About the Organizers

MenEngage Alliance

MenEngage is a global network present in 92 countries, working with individual and organizational members to engage men and boys in advancing gender equality, LGBTIQ+ rights, and social justice. In recent years, the Alliance formalized a Climate Justice Working Group, recognizing that climate change cannot be separated from the gender power dynamics that drive it.

The Working Group produced a research article — “Care Is Not Only the Goal, It’s the Way” — published in the NORMA special issue, drawing on surveys and structured interviews with approximately 40 members across the alliance, spanning multiple regions.

NORMA: International Journal for Masculinity Studies

NORMA recently published a double special issue titled “Men, Masculinities, and the (m)Anthropocene: Ecological, Social, Economic, Political Relations, Processes and Consequences,” co-edited by Jeff Hearn, Martin Hultman, Tamara Shefer, and Kadri Arvik. The issue contains 11 articles, the first five centering research from the Global South—Zimbabwe, Colombia, China, Australia—and the second five from Northwest Europe, alongside the MenEngage collaboration.

The double special issue on men, masculinities, and the (m)Anthropocene is available at [here](#).