



MenEngage Alliance
working with men and boys for gender equality

comotion



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MenEngage Alliance Evaluation

JULY 2024

Executive Summary

This evaluation of the MenEngage Alliance's Strategic Plan 2021-24 was carried out by a team from Comotion (formally Global Office Consulting) and LDH Consulting, from March to July 2024. Using a mixed methods approach with feminist and decolonial lenses, we assessed the Alliance's progress across the four focus areas in the strategic plan, along with organisation-wide indicators of success.

Overall, MenEngage has made significant strides during this strategic period, and it is clear much thought and effort has gone into addressing the recommendations in the previous evaluation. Key areas of growth include:

- Significant moves to support membership needs and add value to their work, through shared values, accountability, convenings and governance changes.
- Impressive advocacy and policy successes in global spaces.
- Careful governance changes to better include marginalised and diverse voices in a meaningful way.
- A unique and very valued voice in the gender equality community that can be leveraged for more impact.
- Strong, thoughtful and kind leadership and board who aren't afraid to tackle hard issues in a collaborative way, and hold each other accountable.

We also see the impact of long standing tensions around mission within the Alliance, as well as challenges around prioritisation, and meeting the needs of a diverse membership. We see a number of key opportunities for the Alliance to deepen impact, that require additional donor support. We make recommendations particularly around:

- Clarifying the purpose of the Alliance, with respect to meeting membership needs, adding value to their work, and conducting work in itself, and then better communicating this to partners and donors.
- Further inculcating values through the network, translating values to real life, and helping members live the values of the Alliance.
- Strengthening the unique role the Alliance can play in addressing the anti-rights movement, as well as regional and national-level opportunities to support shared causes.
- Supporting national-level progress on a range of gender issues, and communicating these wins.
- Exploring ways to communicate to and bring on board new audiences with a lower understanding of the issues the Alliance works on.
- Simpler and more effective monitoring and evaluation systems that help internal teams understand progress and course correct, and external audiences understand the successes of the Alliance.

Methodology

The goal of this evaluation was to assess the progress of the MenEngage Alliance over the period 2021-24, in accordance with its strategic plan. The evaluation was carried out from March to July 2024 by a team of evaluators from Global Office Consulting and LDH Consulting.

The evaluation was structured to evaluate the focus areas of the 2021-24 Strategic Plan, in addition to assessment of key organisational 'connective tissues' identified by the evaluation team (communications, governance, monitoring and evaluation). The team used MenEngage's strategic plan internal indicators, as well as its own informed assessment of organisational success.

The evaluation was composed of five main phases - desk research and literature review, key informant interviews, a qualitative survey, deep listening workshops, and data analysis and compilation. The evaluation employed a mixed methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative research methods to provide a comprehensive evaluation of MenEngage's strategic plan. The mixed methods approach allowed us to triangulate data and information, and increase the reliability and depth of findings. The evaluation team also applied feminist and de-colonial lenses to our work, considering power dynamics, regional context and culture, language, gender and other elements that can result in bias in data collection and analysis. While no approaches are perfect, the team critically assessed each step of our evaluation, with ourselves, with the MenEngage Global Secretariat, the MenEngage Global board, and with interview respondents with whom we spoke.

The desk review encompassed over 20 documents, including the strategic plan itself, previous annual reports, previous strategic plans and evaluations, toolkits, and accountability and results frameworks. Desk research was carried out from March to April 2024.

The quantitative component consisted of a survey in the field from May 25th to June 10th 2024. The survey was shared by the Global Secretariat to the MenEngage membership list of 1455 members, donors and stakeholders by email. The survey was available in multiple languages, including French, Spanish, and English. The survey garnered 79 responses. This is a lower than average survey response in this sector (we use a 10% click through rate as a rule of thumb), and while not statistically rigorous, provided useful data as respondents came from a broad cross section of membership.

The qualitative component included observation of and engagement in the MenEngage Members' Assembly over three days, attendance at board meetings including a two-day global board retreat, 23 individual semi-structured interviews, and five focus groups, including with regional groups and youth representation. Additionally, we workshopped preliminary insights with board members over a day and a half, gathering their feedback.

After collecting the various forms of data, we cross-matched and triangulated the information. We analysed each set of data separately, and then cross-referenced with each other. We looked for patterns, themes, and discrepancies. We aligned each data point with the relevant section(s) of the Strategic Plan. Where there were differing points of view or discrepancies, we discussed these as a team, with the MenEngage Global Secretariat, and built the issues into follow up interviews and workshops for further exploration.

Throughout the process, the evaluation team tested key findings at the earliest stage with the MenEngage team, board and key stakeholders. Each stage of the evaluation built on previous stages, with interviews used to confirm or challenge initial assumptions from desk research, and workshops used to add context and nuance to interview findings. This iterative approach ensures assumptions are actively challenged or confirmed, and reduces the risk of bias affecting evaluation findings.

Further details of the methodology, along with survey results, data, and interview details, are found in the Annex.

Evaluation

In this section, we describe the findings of the evaluation, organised against the current strategic plan result areas. We have also evaluated cross-cutting organisational areas, namely monitoring and evaluation, communications, and governance. We have weighted the findings to distinguish between strong thematics, and more minor issues. 'Key findings' describes thematics backed by multiple data sources that the evaluation team thought were critical organisational issues. 'Details' contains more minor issues that were either strongly supported by data but not critical issues for the Alliance, or anecdotal but still informative issues. Finally, we have distilled the key findings into a series of critical juncture issues that were common threads through all areas of operations. These can form the basis of conversations for the next strategic period, and were explored initially in a board retreat in May 2024.

Membership Engagement

Overview

Overall, the MenEngage Alliance has significantly strengthened its membership engagement over the review period. Much of the focus of the Alliance in recent years has been in this area. It has done this work despite and while addressing challenging dynamics common to global networks, like communicating across very disparate and large membership, disparities in funding, and differences in member capacity. The strengthened membership engagement has in many ways, acted as a backbone to allow progress in other result areas. However, these challenges have also taken considerable time and energy, and potentially diverted attention from other result areas. It would be worthwhile examining in the next strategic period which of these outstanding issues can be resolved, and which are inherent tensions in any global network that instead need to be navigated.

Key Findings

- Membership engagement is a core activity for any network - it is the *raison d'être* in many ways, and the backbone on which much other mission delivery rests. It is clear that **great thought is given by the Global Secretariat to members' views and needs**. This came through in desk reviews, interviews, board meetings, and throughout the evaluation process. Much of the organisational focus in the last 3-5 years has been on building up policies, values, and governance for members, and trialing new ways to engage members. Not all members could see or appreciate this work - by its nature, it can be invisible, only noticed when it is not present. But **we find that it has contributed significantly to the professionalism of the Alliance, the delivery of its advocacy and policy wins, the credibility of its voice and ability to forge strong partnerships, and to stronger regional and country progress on gender equality**. It has also strongly influenced members' own beliefs in a positive way.
 - There is room to better connect the story of stronger membership engagement, to impact on the ground, and make the case for increased funding to support these important activities.
- Members and external stakeholders felt MenEngage's **convenings were excellent**, particularly because they played a unique role in the sector. There are no other spaces for conversations and collective action on the role of men and boys' in gender and social justice issues, and members derived significant value from spaces curated by MenEngage. They cited a sense of solidarity, sharing best practice, identifying common challenges, and developing shared strategies. The "Ubuntu symposium" was specifically cited as successful, bringing 5,000 participants together over seven months through various forums. The symposium galvanized members and the momentum drove collective actions over the coming year.

→ The Alliance has made **significant progress in developing and disseminating Alliance-wide policies, standards, practices and values**. Members rated the Alliance as 3.5 out of 5, on the issue of representing a shared vision and values across the network. However, qualitative data collected during interviews shows there are still **gaps in the implementation and real-life use of these policies**. Some members may feel they are reflecting their understanding of MenEngage's values in their behaviour, but this may not actually be the case in reality. The next step of the work is in contextualising the principles and values, and helping members enact them in their own decisions and actions. This point is expanded on further in the section on governance.

- **66% of respondents were aware of the MenEngage Accountability Standards and Core Principles**. Given these standards are a newer body of work, this is a solid proportion of members, AND it gives the Alliance room to further ensure awareness and alignment with its values and accountability standards.

→ Connected to values, there was a question identified in the goals of member engagement. **Is the goal to support MenEngage members' on their own journey to challenge their own beliefs? Or is it to challenge attitudes and beliefs in other external parties?**

- The Alliance has been proactive in addressing this at global and regional levels, and are not shy about challenging each other in these spaces. Many respondents felt there was room to expand this approach to national level.
- Some members expressed concern that any initiative to address their own journeys in understanding masculinity would appear too myopic and would result in negative responses by the community. And yet, a movement often begins with supporting its own members' growth and journeys, and it is clear the Alliance has been successful in this difficult work already. This tension is explored further in the report.

→ Donors would like to more fully understand the value and impact of membership engagement. For example, members consistently value in-person convenings - this came through strongly in interviews and in the survey - yet it is common for donors to not see the value in funding member convenings. There is work to be done in **better making the case for why membership engagement is a critical part of the Alliance's impact. How do the convenings translate to tangible impact?** All donors we spoke to said they understood how the Alliance engaged its members as part of activities funded by themselves, but they were not sure how the Alliance in general engages and communicates with its members, outside of the specific activities that donor funds. There is room to help current and prospective donors understand the depth, breadth and potential of the Alliance, and the importance of the network in supporting donor goals.

- For example, convenings are critical for developing shared advocacy campaigns that then achieve policy wins, or for improving GBV best practice, or for bringing in new actors or donors. There is also room for existing donors to help prospective donors understand the link between membership engagement and mission impact, aligned with specific donor strategies.

Details

- In the survey, average member response to the question ‘**On a scale of 1 to 5, how strongly do you feel a sense of ownership and belonging as part of MenEngage Alliance?**’ was 3.7, which is solid. The majority (48 out of 79) of responses were 4 and 5, reflecting the work of the Alliance in this area. Likewise, the average response to whether MenEngage membership had benefited their work, was 3.5 out of 5.
- Meaningful membership engagement in global coalition or network models is always challenging given the diversity of contexts, needs and resources. Some members don’t always have the time, capacity or knowledge to contribute fully to global conversations, even with innovative ways to support their engagement. Members consistently said in interviews, the Members’ Assembly, and to the Global Secretariat that they want more engagement and consultation, and MenEngage has made consistent efforts to meet these wishes.
- It would be interesting to **better understand WHY members join the Alliance**. What value do members get from the Alliance, and why do they join? MenEngage has done some work on this in 2021, but it might be useful to explore further, or as a regular part of engaging new members.
- **The Colab peer learning sessions were cited as an example of success**. Members felt they drove innovation, expanded knowledge, and improved member programmes, advocacy and communications. In the survey, member awareness of the Colabs was high.



Co-Labs were really well attended and there’s a huge desire from members to improve programmatic outcomes. We can build on this progress.

Global Secretariat Team Member

Policy and Advocacy

Overview

It was universally acknowledged that MenEngage Alliance delivers beyond its capacity on paper, in terms of policy and advocacy impact, especially in global spaces, and increasingly at country level. There has been progress in coordinating and amplifying regional and national advocacy efforts, although work is still nascent. There is great potential for growth in this area.

Key Findings

- MenEngage's **advocacy work has significantly strengthened** in the past four years, and is very impactful, especially considering funding and staffing levels. It has secured significant wins that larger and better-funded organisations have struggled to achieve.
 - Donors and external partners were able to cite specific Alliance wins, such as securing language in United Nations documents. **MenEngage is highly valued for its global advocacy and policy work.**
 - There is a clear cadence to the advocacy work, and MenEngage has a **strong knowledge of the spaces it works in**, particularly in United Nations' spaces.
- There is **enormous opportunity and need for MenEngage's voice as part of efforts to address the anti-rights movement**. Nearly every respondent identified the backlash as the critical issue of the moment, and supported a greater role for MenEngage's unique voice. There is the need and opportunity for resources to build country capacity to respond to the backlash, including connecting national groups into the right communities, and supporting them in pro-active and reactive strategies grounded in evidence. For example, partners spoke of the power of MenEngage's voice in opposing anti-homosexuality bills in a number of countries, and felt that this organising power could be applied to other contexts too.
- MenEngage produces **very advanced, thoughtful and nuanced policy documents that help align members around a common policy, enunciate positions, and equalise knowledge**. These could be adapted and further leveraged as communications, community and advocacy documents.



We see MenEngage as critical on gender-based violence of course, but they are also critical on sexual and reproductive health and rights. They have a unique role and power, and we'd like to see it applied to the growing threat of the anti-rights movement.

External Partner

- Every external partner spoke about **MenEngage's unique voice or unique value add in the gender equality space**. There is an increasing sector awareness of the need for progressive, informed voices that reflect a men and masculinities perspective, as well as the power that men's voices still hold in society. Yet there are very few alternative organisations doing strong men and boys work. Partners spoke about the power of men's voices in solidarity with feminist activists, for example in tackling GBV, speaking up about the importance of family planning, or supporting increased decision-making for women in the workplace and home. Partners also spoke about the important different perspectives and nuances men and masculinities work can bring to gender equality - as people themselves affected by inequality, as holders of power, as allies, or as gatekeepers of equality. Recent major donor disbursements of funding to the men and masculinities space underscore this increasing momentum and awareness, and there is real room for MenEngage to deepen its impact by drawing out this unique voice and power.
- **There is still significant room to grow at the national and regional levels**, including making shared best practice connections between members, increasing advocacy skills in members, and connecting them to wider advocacy campaigns. There is a **unique role men and boys can play in campaigns on the anti-rights movement, childcare, girls' education, child, early and forced marriage, women, peace and security, equal pay, workplace harassment, and family planning**, among a host of potential issues. External partners cited this as a way for MenEngage members to support from behind and play a key role in institutional change, while still being accountable to women's movements.
- The Alliance could also increase its impact by bridging gaps between national/regional advocacy strategies, and the global advocacy strategy. By aligning strategies and collaborating on shared advocacy priorities at multiple levels, we see potential for further advocacy and policy wins at national and regional level, on a range of files. The Global Secretariat is aware of this, and is trying to address it.
 - For example, partners identified a need to move towards **collective advocacy**, not just shared best practice or Communities of Practice. For example, a MenEngage shared campaign, SMART training in advocacy, or Call to Action. However, we acknowledge the challenge in this, as it relates to supporting the gender equality movement from behind.

- **National and regional advocacy efforts could be better communicated and owned by the Alliance or members.** Due to communication and resource gaps, national and regional advocacy efforts are not well known or understood by the secretariat team, other members, partners or donors. This means that wins and challenges are not always captured for impact or evaluation purposes. **Members cited a number of wins in interviews that were impressive and could be better supported and communicated.** For example:
- National members said in many places, they are now accepted as part of gender advocacy communities in their countries, where they were not in the past. This critically allows them to plug into existing networks, listen and learn, and leverage their unique voice to add value to gender equality campaigns. It also speaks to alignment on values and trust-building work
 - Successful interventions around GBV and supporting improved local policies, for example, inserting men and masculinities into the national action plan for SGBV in Sri Lanka. It was the first national action plan for the region which included men and masculinities.
 - Partnerships and campaigns in Nepal on GBV with football associations.
 - “MenEngage members were very encouraging on the [country] homosexuality bill. They reached out proactively and asked what they could do. They took their lead from us, but raised their own voices. It was a good case study of allyship, and could be expanded to other areas, like recent femicides for example” - external feminist partner
- **Members could use more support to directly articulate the link/theory of change between strengthened Alliance support, and their wins.** Despite specific prompting, some members could not name specific examples of success, even though they knew there had been a number of them.
- There is a tension point explored further in the report about MenEngage’s role in advocacy - whether the Global Secretariat furthers its own advocacy work and leads in spaces as a unique voice with its own perspective and expertise, or whether it supports from behind feminist and women’s organisations’ advocacy.



I think MenEngage could use their voice more directly with decision-makers. Their highly informed expert members could advise as equals, and help decision-makers with their struggles on gender equality.

External Partner

Details

- While the Alliance's global advocacy work was **overall very valued**, **there were some questions about choice of focus**. Specifically, given the need explored further below to **communicate outside our own small circles and reach new audiences**, should the Alliance identify different advocacy priorities and venues? Some respondents cited the amount of capacity taken up by Commission for the Status of Women week, and suggested critical thought about the return on investment and insider audience of people already bought into our cause.
- In the survey, in response to the question 'Since 2021, have you noticed an increase in collective actions and participation within MenEngage Alliance?', respondents gave an average response of 2.4 out of 3, which is very high. Only 8% of respondents answered no to this question. However, 20% of respondents said they had not participated in joint actions, and another 28% were unsure. This is higher than the average 'negative' responses to the survey which was 8-10%.

Programming Best Practice and Capacity

Overview

Overall, this focus area is more internally focused and a smaller body of work compared to the other three. Members are pleased with the Alliance's progress in this result area, but it is not an area well known or understood by external partners. Members appreciated the space created by the Alliance for sharing common challenges, and expressed a desire to deepen this support to them. There is however, a risk of mission creep if the Alliance strays too far into programme design, implementation and funding.

Key Findings

- In interviews, **all members spoke about the Alliance helping them improve their programming, and 92% of survey respondents said MenEngage has helped them improve the quality of their programming for men and boys.** This is a very strong finding, and could be emphasised and probed more by the Alliance. Interview respondents were not able to narrate a theory of change or cite specific examples of how this had happened though, and both would both be enormously helpful in building a case for this focus area.
- External stakeholders and donors said in interviews they were not as clear on this result area. Given the shifting funding landscape, it would be very useful to help donors connect to opportunities to increase impact. If donors were aware of how much MenEngage Alliance supports improved programmatic practice, it may unlock more funding opportunities from different pots of funding.
- As global organisations restructure, and bilateral aid is re-prioritised towards country impact, **increasing programmatic impact is likely to be more of a funder priority in the future.** However, to take advantage of this, the Alliance would need to show value beyond offering a convening space on programming.
 - Donors specifically requested more **information on expanded impact and delivery of concrete results at country level.** For example, 'thanks to improved programming that resulted from an Alliance training course, we increased by 18% the number of men with changed attitudes to GBV'.
- There was **strong support from members for the Global Secretariat role in helping them improve their programmes,** and share common programmatic challenges. Some respondents suggested ideas like best practice and evidence translation workshops, which are within the scope of the Alliance currently. Others suggested ideas like the Alliance taking the lead in securing funding for them, which would not currently be in scope. This issue of scope and mission is explored further in the final section of the report.



I see a leading role for MenEngage in programmatic best practice on systems change, with its members. They have room to go beyond individual behaviour change, to evidence and best practice on institutional and structural change.

External Partner

Details

- 74% of respondents said they had used peer learning or similar spaces, which is a strong percentage of membership. It is also worth examining why others have not or have not been able to engage in these spaces. As evaluators, we posit it may be a lack of time, capacity and funding.
- Two external partners expressed a desire to better align some member programming with best practice. One cited a specific example of programming that was not reflective of good practice. Although this was not reflective of the Alliance overall, it is a useful anecdote showing further room to go in consistency in Alliance values among all members.
- The issue of funding for regional and national programmatic work was raised repeatedly by members of the Alliance at all levels. This issue is explored in more detail in the governance section.

Movement Building

Overview

The Alliance has made significant progress in many aspects of this area, namely a number of impressive partnerships, excellent centering of feminist movement values, good inclusion of LGBTQ priorities in light of challenges, and strong SRHR focus. Progress has been slower in some places, in part because this is the most loosely defined focus area, and the number of priorities make it hard to succeed overall. Global Secretariat members noted this focus area could instead be a cross-cutting 'way of working that serves the other three result areas', as opposed to a stand-alone pillar itself. In the next strategic period, this focus area would benefit from clarification as to its purpose and goal.

Key Findings

- The Alliance has done **incredible work building trust with the feminist community, and centring feminist perspectives**. This has been challenging at times and required considerable **policy expertise, diplomacy, care and hard work by the Secretariat and Global Board**. It has paid dividends in terms of the Alliance's ability to deliver on its mission, and was recognised universally by external partners.
- There **remains natural discussion in the Alliance about the implications of centring the feminist movement** in its work. This is to be expected, and is part of the evolution of the Alliance. For example, some members and partners were unsure how to balance accountability to the feminist movement and the need to reflect certain ideas and language, with talking directly to men and boys in language that resonates with them. There is further work to be done **in helping national members understand and centre the feminist movement in a way the global Alliance has already done**. This issue is explored in more depth in sections on communication and key strategic questions. These issues are acknowledged openly, but more space is needed to actually discuss and decide on them.
- **Partnerships have been quietly excellent**. There does not seem to be a full recognition of how high-value the Alliance's partnerships are, and how valued the Alliance's perspective is to partners (see key points on unique perspective and value-add). There is **high potential for growth** in this area, in order to deliver impact, and as a means of solving specific challenges. Members suggested new partnership modalities could help MenEngage access different funding streams, even if this means giving up some control in order to share resources and risk. Donors see MenEngage working well with other grantees, which is important to them.
 - We see potential to partner further on SRHR (identified by external partners as a key issue), the anti-rights movement (same), and gender equality campaigns (for example with philanthropic funders). We see potential at global, regional and national levels, across advocacy, policy, programme best practice, and norms.



It has been fantastic to watch MenEngage figure out how they fit into and complement the feminist movement. They are clear how they movement build and protect each other in times of shrinking civic space.

External Partner

The Alliance has **made progress on centring perspectives of constituent and marginalised communities** (see further details below).

Finally, there is further need to clarify what the movement is. There are different understandings of 'the movement' across the network. **Partners, donors and members have different understandings of what movement they're part of, and towards what goal.** This critical tension is explored more in the final section.

Details

- It was clear to all **how much effort the Alliance has put into centring the feminist movement** in its work. Feminist thinking runs through the Alliance, and is routinely at the heart of all its actions. The Alliance deserves significant credit for the careful, thoughtful work that has gone into building credibility and trust with the feminist community. External partners and donors were very complimentary about how much work this has taken. **The Alliance's values are very clear, and provide solidarity in times of shrinking civic space.** There is real room to extend this solidarity and understanding to members at national and sometimes regional levels.
- There is **strong SRHR inclusion**, and external partners and donors see MenEngage's voice as critical and unique in this space. There is **significant room for MenEngage to expand its SRHR work**, particularly in policy and advocacy, programmatic best practice, and in tackling the anti-rights backlash.
- There is **good LGBTQ inclusion**, but there are still tensions around men and LGBTQ issues that reflect global attitudes and overall trends, particularly in light of recent anti-LGBTQ legislation in a number of countries. **67% of members felt LGBTQ issues had been well included**, but some anecdotally flagged that it was a difficult issue in their countries, and they were grappling with how best to respond given rising anti-LGBTQ sentiment. We actually see potential for MenEngage to lean into this tension, while being careful about member safety.
- Respondents had **high praise for meaningful youth inclusion in MenEngage's internal processes.** By this, they meant the way MenEngage involved youth throughout all its decisions, committees, board and governance.

- On climate, members often expressed a desire to be further involved in this space, but without any specifics. However, **external partners and donors did not see a leadership role for the Alliance on climate**. They encouraged participation, support and learning, but did not see it as a core space for MenEngage.
- Members wanted **more time and connections to build partnerships outside of specific grant moments**. In many organisations, partnership work often only happens in the immediate context of a grant application. Members wanted to be able to immerse themselves in the community and build networks, so there is a strong base when any funding opportunities do come along. There is room for the Alliance to make the case to donors for this type of outreach work.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Overview

Overall, the **Alliance's progress is strong, especially considering how many priorities are in the current strategic plan**, and the limited funding for activities. Many strategic plan indicators have not just been met, but surpassed. However, and critically, it is **not possible to show a clear or compelling picture of progress** because M&E structure, format and processes don't fully allow for it.

- There are **multiple frameworks (for the organisation, plus for donors) and too many indicators to realistically collect data against** on an ongoing basis. Some indicators are the same, others are not. Some indicators require ongoing polling or qualitative data collection, which has not always been done. While the results framework was intended to be very detailed and specific (which is admirable and important), it actually **risks blurring accountability when frameworks and ongoing monitoring are overwhelming**.
- Nearly all external respondents and the research noted that **MenEngage is reluctant to claim or sometimes even acknowledge its results**. In part because of the need to centre the feminist movements, and in part because of concerns about risk, **MenEngage has not always been clear about its role in successes**. We see a balance between false binaries of unfairly and loudly claiming entire responsibility for collective success, and eschewing any role in successes. We heard donors saying it was critical for them to understand MenEngage's role in wins.
 - Donors needed macro-level successes, for example, 'we brought a unique men and boys' perspective to the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security in x country'. Donors also wanted granular level results like, '18 men changed their opinion because of improved programming due to our Community of Practice'
- This issue connects to points below about communication to audiences who are not highly engaged in the Alliance's work. External partners said there was **a need to go back to basics and state a simple theory of change**, eg) 'without men and boys changing their social norms, we will not achieve gender equality', then back this theory with simple, clear and concrete results.
- MenEngage produces **excellent detailed reports with solid analysis, concrete metrics and examples**. These are essential for bilateral donors who spend taxpayer money especially for taxpayer dollars.

- However, they could also be accompanied by more **simple, compelling documents that cut to the heart of MenEngage's value and impact** in an easy 'on ramp' for people new to the network. Donors new to the Alliance said they **struggled to condense results and value in a simple way, from the documents or conversations**. Existing donors expressed this had been a challenge for them in reaching out to their donor peers and recruiting new donors. Many Alliance or network models struggle to articulate the value of the connective tissue they provide. This is a challenge for MenEngage too, in clearly communicating the roles and added value of the Global Secretariat, the regional bodies, and national members.
- External partners also recognised the tension the Global Secretariat faces on this issue, and acknowledges the past need to be very clearly in a supportive role. However, there was consensus that the **Alliance has done an excellent job at building trust with the community, and so could tentatively begin to better articulate their role in collective successes without as much risk**.

Communications

Overview

Communications have really professionalised in the past four years. Much work has gone into developing a modern website, experimenting with impactful and regular member communication, curating a social media presence, and promoting events. MenEngage is now thinking about how to **make their communications efforts resonate with lay or advocacy audiences**, in addition to the work for highly-aware community members.

Membership communication is an inherent challenge in any alliance, in part because of the diversity of communication needs, and the absorption capacity of members. Time (and thus, funding) is often the biggest constraint. Members often express the need for more and better communication, but Global Secretariat staff and the members themselves often don't have time to produce or absorb the communications they all want to produce.

Nearly all respondents talked about **the need to communicate outside our own silos**.

- External partners and donors felt like communications are very much for members, and it can be hard for external parties to work out what MenEngage is actually doing. They wanted **clearer, simpler communication for external audiences** about MenEngage's activities. This is also an absorption capacity issue with external parties themselves.
- There is also potential to **better use communications for advocacy**. With simpler, compelling messages, fit to their audience, MenEngage could better reach decision makers in ways that move them.
- Respondents also saw an **opportunity for MenEngage to do proactive media, and influence popular and cultural discourse**. The Alliance's voice would add enormous value and a unique, needed perspective on disparate issues like the incel movement, hyper masculine authoritarian leaders, and GBV in sports. The Alliance has positions on these issues - they just need translating to lay audiences.

Communicating outside our own silo requires us to go back to basics - to communicate our theory of change on why men and boys matter to gender equality, in a clear, simple and compelling way. Most people are still at a basic level on this.

There was feedback from external groups that **some MenEngage jargon is too reflective of global spaces. It is insider lingo**, used to signal alignment to fellow progressive groups. This has its place - given MenEngage's strength and impact in global spaces, it is important language matches the tone of these spaces. However, global language often sounds far from local realities and contexts and does not always resonate with people outside our small circles. Plain language is an equity issue and important for decolonial approaches. **Members have to be able to understand issues and make them relevant to their own context, while holding true to overall Alliance values.**



How do we take big words but important values like dismantling patriarchy, and systems change, and help people understand them in their local contexts and ways of thinking?

Global Board Member

Governance and Organisational Effectiveness

Overview

Significant effort and thought has gone into improving governance, increasing internal accountability, and clarifying roles and responsibilities. The Global Secretariat has balanced a number of tensions in the Alliance, and has done so openly and fairly. These challenges were not always resolved (and it may never be possible to do so), but the Alliance acted with integrity and feminist principles, and within its capacity to address them. There remain a number of critical tensions, and need for clarity to guide the secretariat in the next strategic period.

- Accountability and governance have been a focus for the past year particularly. This has been at times a naturally messy and human process of change with difficult conversations, but it has resulted in positive progress.
- The **Global Secretariat leaders were universally recognised as excellent leaders**, skilled at balancing their tensions. The Alliance is overall trustful and open, and addresses complex issues with kindness and thought. This is reflected in survey results where 87% of respondents felt the regional governance and operating structure was good or strong, and 92% felt the global structure was good or strong. Responses to this question also varied by region, with African, North American, Caribbean and European respondents more likely to rate governance as very strong, and Asian and Latin American respondents as weaker.
- The Global **Board is collaborative, engaged and has a high knowledge of both content matter and the Alliance dynamics**. Board members acknowledge the need for it to **better set priorities and find time to discuss and decide on big picture issues**.
- Changes to governance models have resulted in a **stronger role for regional committees**. This is also an example of decolonialisation in action.
- Youth governance has been very thoughtful, credible and genuine. There was high praise for the meaningful way youth are integrated into MenEngage's decision-making.
- MenEngage has a number of **strong and well thought out policies, toolkits and frameworks** now. There is a high member awareness of these documents. The **next step is in making these paper documents real, and helping members apply the policies to real life situations**.

- While the Global Secretariat and Global Board is consistently strong, there is work to translate this to regional and national platforms. **There is (natural and understandable) variety in governance at regional and national levels.** In future, emphasis should be placed on progress at these levels, in part because this is where the bulk of the Alliance's work will happen. This includes **clarity and follow through on shared values, accountability, shared strategies, and roles and responsibilities.**
- The decentralised structure also creates a **gap between the Global Secretariat, and country networks.** Regional platforms are supposed to act as a connector, but this does not always happen. This leaves both the Global Secretariat and members without critical information about each other's plans, priorities and needs. Opportunities are missed because of this.
- There is a lack of clarity in members about respective roles and responsibilities for the Global Secretariat, regional platforms, national platforms, and members. More education and communication would help here.
- **Succession planning and consistent leadership is an issue for regions.** Africa and Europe are currently solid, but South Asia changes every two years, and previously, it took four years to put a new leader in place. This hinders regional effectiveness.
- Many respondents raised issues of **funding equity within and between Alliance members.** Funding strongly influences power, voice and capacity within the Alliance. They felt the Global Secretariat needed to support donors in understanding the value of regional and national work, as well as thinking about the Alliance's role in helping members secure funding. However, these roles would be significant mission creep for the Alliance, and there are risks around NGO-ization, sustainability of this capacity, and setting unfair expectations of what the Alliance can or should deliver for members. The funding landscape for men and masculinities work is complex and fast evolving, and care would need to be taken to navigate these dynamics.
 - One senior member suggested a special Alliance committee to monitor project proposals and support applications on behalf of all members.
 - Another noted the need to decide where the Global Secretariat can secure funding for everyone, and where regional networks should secure their own funding as a parallel and complementary effort. They emphasised the need to coordinate donor outreach.
- As we see funders focus more on local delivery of programmes, rather than global networks, there were questions about **how to adjust without becoming a programme delivery organisation.** Respondents mentioned the potential for the Global Secretariat to facilitate introductions to local embassies, local initiative funds, or provide policy assistance to help national networks focus more on specific local issues like LGBTQI engagement. Again, these ideas need to be discussed in the context of mission creep, and with a clear eyed view of what the Alliance does and does not do.

Key Strategic Junctures

As part of this evaluation, we have identified a number of 'crux' issues. These are critical junctures or tension points that MenEngage Alliance is facing, and they ran like threads through all our data. Such issues are present in all organizations/networks, and coalition-type bodies always hold a number of tensions in balance - these do not go away, and part of the work of a coordinating body is navigating them as they arise. We hope naming these underlying tension points will guide MenEngage Alliance in its next strategic design process.

Some of the points below may prove inherently unresolvable, and will require ongoing thoughtful navigation and discussion. Others can be resolved, but require time and hard decisions to get there. Part of the next strategic period should include time to address these issues, and make decisions where needed.

Who does MenEngage Alliance serve, and why? How can MenEngage speak to different communities, while still being in service to feminist communities?

MenEngage has spent significant time and effort to position itself in service of the gender equality and feminist communities. This has been an essential part of their journey as an Alliance. By taking the time and care to build trust with these communities, MenEngage has integrated itself into the community, delivered mission wins, and advanced thoughtful work on engaging men and boys.

This approach also has challenges. It can be hard for MenEngage to use different language, or speak effectively to other communities in ways that resonate. It is also hard at times for MenEngage to acknowledge or claim their role in mission successes, and has led to MenEngage being somewhat timid about its unique voice on men and boys, in some cases.

Likewise, there is tension between MenEngage acting as a convenor and secretariat for its members (for example improving programmes, or increasing member funding and capacity), and MenEngage existing to do outwards-facing work across the Alliance (shared campaigns, collective advocacy, public outreach and communications).

Relatedly, how can MenEngage bring the value of its unique perspective to conversations, while acting in a supporting role? In what spaces is it appropriate to take more leadership or be more visible? Fundamentally, what is MenEngage's role in the movement, and who is the movement? External partners and donors noted on these questions, there is a high level of support from donors to address these questions, which they felt gave some license for hard decisions if needed.

How do we counter the trade-offs of our structure?

The move to a decentralised structure served a number of important purposes, as well as living the values of decolonisation. It has also surfaced new tensions, outlined below.

The decentralized structure makes it harder to advance on shared values across the membership. While the Alliance has policies and position papers, these are sometimes disconnected from the actions and beliefs of some members. While the Alliance does not and should not dictate beliefs, it remains an open question what role the Alliance has in intervening in behaviours and actions.

Wider than that, overall lines of responsibility for how MenEngage supports regional and national platforms in their success are not always clear. Where does MenEngage intervene when a regional or national network is struggling? What levers does and should the Global Secretariat and Global Board hold to push for more effective delivery? How do they hold people accountable when actions are not aligned with values? What is their job in resourcing regional and country networks, and how does that fit with a decolonial approach? This issue was noted in the previous evaluation, and the Alliance has made some progress in addressing it.

Finally, questions of governance and structure can consume significant amounts of organisational energy, and MenEngage needs to consider the return on investment of embarking on another round of governance discussions.

What is the role of the Global Secretariat?

There is a tension point around whether the Global Secretariat exists in service of members to support and connect them, or whether it exists to lead tranches of work itself, and if so, what work? Members usually want a global secretariat to serve their needs, whereas donors often want external delivery and impact.

This is also reflected in the difference between the type of work global secretariats tend to do - global advocacy, highly progressive, using academic-style language - and the work of grassroots programme delivery organisations, who use plain language and are grounded in lived realities. For example, global organisations are turning towards 'systems change' as a programmatic priority. Yet for some members, this can be seen as privileged discourse and there are not the resources or context for this to be close to reality. This is also connected to the type of work donors value and will fund. How do we bridge this gap? Can we bridge it at all?

How do we prioritise?

MenEngage has identified the need to prioritise its work in the past. This has not happened as effectively as hoped, and it has instead added more issues and deliverables. This is a common challenge in progressive spaces, where we try to meet constituent needs, we want to validate everyone's concerns, and the challenges are so large.

MenEngage has held conversations about this in the past - How do we focus on where we add significant value? How do we make sure we don't lose critical elements of who we are? How do we make hard decisions like this? How do we communicate to people whose issues aren't going to receive the attention they need? How do we accept letting go of some issues for a period? How can we accommodate all the very different priority issues that the membership has, when the secretariat's role is to serve the members?

Relatedly, a lot of effort and time goes into discussion around contentious policy areas, and trying to come up with common positioning. In some cases, this is important, and the clarity on positioning allows the flowdown of that position through members. But often this flowdown does not happen. It is worth considering whether the Alliance needs to come up with positions on every issue, and how the effort put into this process is then reflected in the follow through to members.

Conclusion

As evaluators, we strongly saw the unique value-add and voice of MenEngage throughout our inquiries. The Alliance has undergone enormous transition and professionalization in the past 10 and four years of this evaluation process, and at each evaluation point, has made thoughtful, careful efforts to address the issues in each evaluation. Global advocacy and policy was a particularly strong area, as was membership engagement. It was clear there is a need for MenEngage's strengthened and expanded work, particularly at regional and national levels.

We see enormous opportunities for MenEngage's impact, that they are currently not able to take full advantage of. We see potential around SRHR, inclusive economies, childcare, tackling the anti-rights movement, and girls' education, child, early and forced marriage, and women, peace and security. We also see strong donor and partner support that has been built up through careful, thoughtful trust-building. This trust provides support for addressing some of the longstanding issues MenEngage has not yet decided on, in the next strategic period.

We see space in the next strategic period for MenEngage to a) broaden its audience beyond highly-involved gender equality stakeholders, b) tackle a manageable number of the harder 'crux' issues flagged in this report, and c) support increased and measurable progress at regional and national levels, connected to an overall global strategy. Many of these goals will require further donor support to achieve.

It has been a delight to learn more about MenEngage's important work, and we are excited to see where the work takes the Alliance in its next strategic period.

Detailed Methodology

Survey

The survey questions were designed based on the MenEngage Alliance Results Framework. They were developed by the evaluation team, and reviewed and piloted by the MenEngage Global Secretariat. This alignment ensured that the collected data directly mapped to the strategic priorities of the Alliance. The structure of the questions used rating scales of either 1-5 or 1-3, which are easy for participants to complete. The survey also included a number of open-ended questions. These allowed participants to elaborate on their responses, providing richer qualitative data alongside the quantitative metrics.

While the survey was anonymous, demographic information was collected with consent, which allowed us to break down data by region. While the evaluation focused primarily on the Global Alliance, we have noted where the regional angle enabled deeper and contextual analysis, or showcased regional variations.

The survey was broadly confidential, although not completely anonymous as identifying information could potentially be extrapolated to identify a respondent, if for example, only one participant from a small geographic area completed the survey. To avoid this, respondents could choose to self-identify, or leave any question blank to avoid identifying themselves. Aggregate data is shared below, and only the evaluation team has access to the detailed responses.

The survey remains open, and the MenEngage Global Secretariat has expressed interest in using it in future, as part of measuring progress, using this survey as the baseline. The evaluation team will conduct a handover to the Global Secretariat, taking care to safeguard anonymity in doing so.

Focus Groups

Five focus groups were conducted with different demographics within the alliance, including one group of Global Board members and three groups combining youth and regional secretariats and steering committee representatives, with one specifically for Spanish speakers, and translation for French and other speakers. These sessions had guiding questions, but facilitators allowed participants the freedom to discuss topics openly and direct the conversation where they needed, even if the issues they raised seemed unrelated to the strategic plan.

Members' Assembly

Observations were conducted over three days during the Members' Assembly. On the first day, observations were made from an outsider perspective - purely observational with no involvement. This approach is particularly useful in qualitative research as it allows researchers to examine intricate interactions within a natural environment (Rossman, 2010). On the second and third days, breakout rooms were facilitated, allowing for initial insights into major issues and teasing out specific issues in more depth. Evaluators identified issues from previous discussions with the MenEngage Global Secretariat, desk research, and interviews, to dig into during the second and third days of the Members' Assembly. The agenda of the sessions were structured along the focus areas of the strategic plan, allowing us to map directly to indicators.

Interviews

23 one-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted with key internal and external stakeholders, including funders, board members, regional representatives, founding members, global secretariat staff, and partners. Interviews were broadly representative of MenEngage current stakeholders, and included a cross-section geographically, role, and in terms of size of organisation. Given MenEngage's smaller donor base, we only spoke to two donors formally, but also reached out to four prospective donors to understand their impression of MenEngage Alliance. The interviewees were selected through purposeful sampling, targeting individuals with specific insights or roles relevant to the evaluation. Interviews ranged from 30 to 60 minutes and were not recorded to maintain participant anonymity and create a safer space for open communication. Again, the interviews used a similar set of guiding questions for consistency, but informed by feminist approaches, interviewers allowed participants to direct conversation where they needed, and to use the language and terminology of their choice.

Approach

Evaluators applied feminist and decolonial lenses to their work. These are imperfect and subjective processes, with scholarship on decolonial approaches particularly still evolving. Our approach entailed challenging and countering gendered and colonial power structures and epistemologies that have historically marginalized non-global north perspectives. It emphasizes valuing and incorporating indigenous and local knowledge systems, practices, and voices into research and decision-making processes. We actively sought out experiences and insights from traditionally marginalized groups and people, and used deep listening techniques. We used non-prescriptive, open-ended questions that allowed for genuine dialogue, and emphasized improvement and progress along with criticism. While acknowledging considerable limitations in correcting for subconscious and structural biases, we identified and challenged power dynamics throughout the process where possible. We worked with the Global Secretariat and participants of this process to equalise knowledge and power, for example, providing plain language explanation of terms so everyone held the same level of information.

As with any research process, there are limitations. Firstly, with only 79 of 1455 survey responses, the survey sample size was insufficient to achieve statistically significant results. However, the respondents reflected a broad cross-section of leadership and membership, with good regional variety and differing levels of engagement and experience. The limited time frame further constrained the depth and breadth of data collection. Additionally, some participants experienced internet difficulties, restricting participation to those with reliable internet access. These factors, along with the inherent challenges of coordinating across diverse regions and languages, may have affected the evaluation's ability to comprehensively capture the varied experiences and perspectives within MenEngage Alliance.

Any evaluation requires a significant amount of judgement and experience on the part of evaluators. Where different sources of information provided contradictory findings, we discussed these issues as a team, and with the MenEngage Global Secretariat. We noted them for further exploration in follow-up interviews, as part of the iterative process. We prioritised individual interviews and focus groups over survey data, as the qualitative data was much richer and more nuanced. Where we could not resolve discrepancies, or there were a variety of fair interpretations of comments, we have indicated this in the report itself. We have flagged issues that may require further follow-up to fully understand.

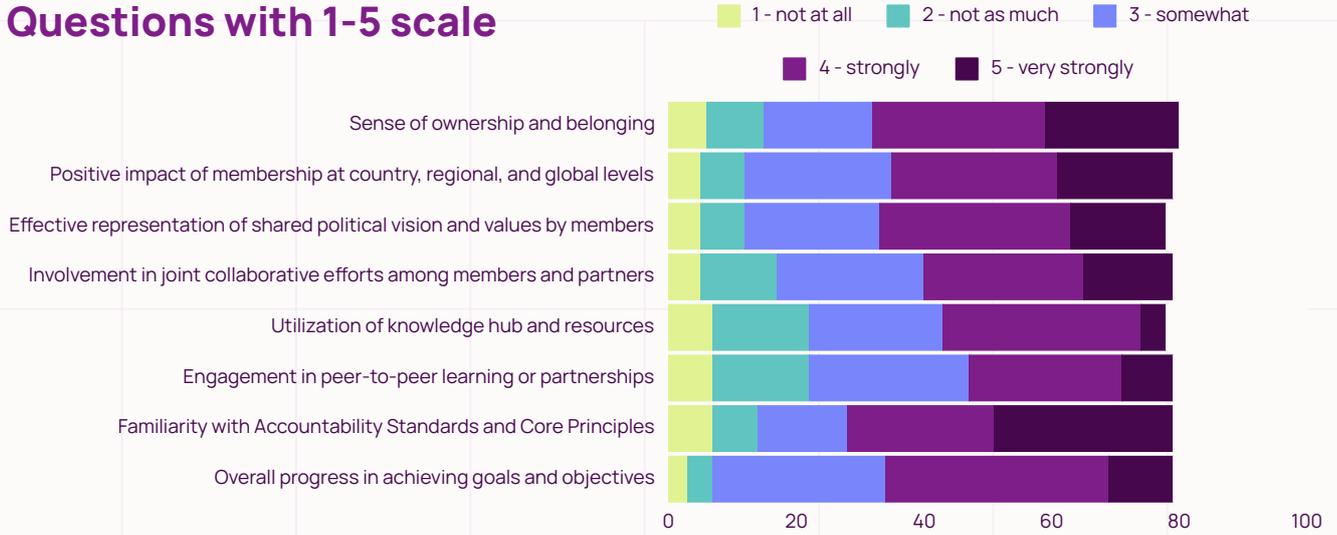
Interviewee Names

- Joni van de Sand - Global Secretariat
- Iaxman Belbase - Global Secretariat
- Bianca Marks - Global Secretariat
- Tom Hornbrook - Global Secretariat
- Jennifer Rodriguez - Global Secretariat
- Samitha Sugathimala - Board co-Chair
- Richard Dzikunu - YIELD hub, youth representative
- Manuel Contreras - World Bank
- Oswaldo Montoya - Global Secretariat
- Rachel Jacobsen - Alliance for Feminist Movements
- Lisa Mossman - SIDA
- Avni Amin - WHO
- Natsnet Ghenrebrhan - Raising Voices/COFEM
- Anonymous respondents - Spotlight Initiative
- Anonymous respondent - Children's Investment Fund Foundation
- Anonymous respondents - Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
- Anonymous respondent - Ford Foundation
- Anonymous respondent - Bilateral Donor
- Anonymous respondent - Global Fund for Women
- Anonymous respondent - United Nations Foundation

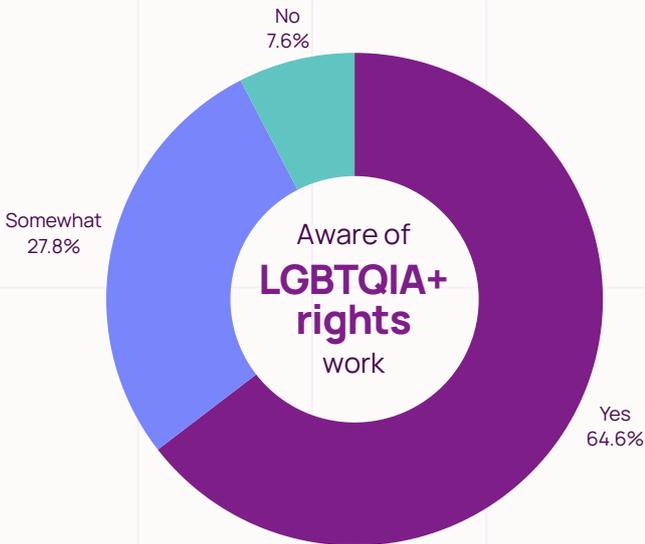
Survey Results

You can view the full survey responses online [here](#).

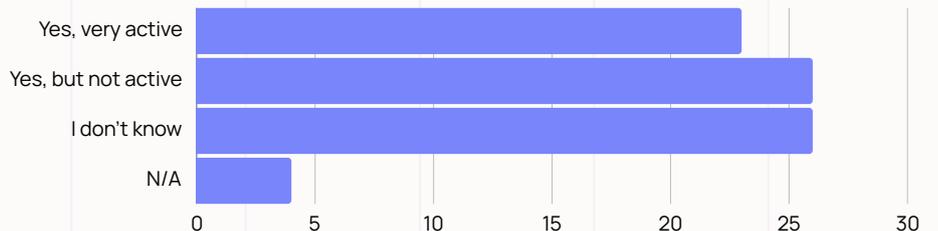
Questions with 1-5 scale



Questions with 1-3 scale



Membership Strategy applicable and active in context





MenEngage Alliance

working with men and boys for gender equality

comotion

social change agency



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