



Gender Forum

Perspectives on Gender Equality

The Green Political Foundation

GENDER FORUM BRIEF

TITLE: Deconstructing Toxic Masculinity: What is Your Role?

Date: Tuesday, 24th April 2018

Venue: Alliance Francaise Loita /Monrovia steet.

Time: 4.00 pm to 6.30 pm ENTRY FREE

Synopsis:

While gender identity is a deeply held feeling of being male, female or another gender, people of different genders often act differently, not because of biological characteristics but because of rigid societal norms created around femininity and masculinity. Masculinity is understood more as a social, cultural and temporal construct, rather than a biological one. The concept of masculinities enjoins us to examine the pressures men and boys may perceive to adhere to specific versions of manhood – particularly the widespread belief that being a man means being a provider or having stable employment, or the beliefs that men need sex more than women, that men should not express emotions, that men should dominate women, and that men should not do domestic tasks¹.

The departure in masculinity, as Stephen Marche describes in his recent New York times op-ed is too much repression: The rules governing masculinity require men to be stoic, to repress virtually all of their emotions (except anger). This leads many men to severely under develop their own ability to analyze and communicate about their own feelings. Our culture, not men's nature, has enforced this emotional repression. The masculinity traits that cause harm (physically, socially and psychologically) to men and boys are what can be defined as toxic masculinity.

According to R.W. Connell - a masculinity expert, as configurations of practice structured by gender relations, masculinities are inherently historical and their making and remaking is a political process affecting the balance of interests in society and the direction of social change.

The Good Men Project defines toxic masculinity as: 'A narrow and repressive description of manhood, designating manhood as defined by violence, sex, status and aggression. It's the cultural ideal of manliness, where strength is everything while emotions are a weakness; where sex and brutality are yardsticks by which men are measured, while supposedly "feminine" traits—which can range from emotional vulnerability to simply not being

hypersexual—are the means by which your status as "man" can be taken away.'

Masculinity becomes toxic when specific standards of behavior are encouraged and enforced despite being damaging. Dominance, violence, self-reliance to the point of absurdity and the devaluation of anything seen as being "feminine", are all points where masculinity goes from being positive to toxic². It's the mandating of the limited scope of what men are allowed to be, if they're to be considered "real men". Identifying as male isn't enough to be a man. If you don't perform these specific actions, or model these behaviors, you're not a "real man."

Or as Kenyans would say; "Wacha Umama"

Key discussion points:

- **What exactly is masculinity and when does it become toxic?**
- **The effect of toxic masculinity on gender equality**
- **How do we address Toxic Masculinity?**

Discussion Panel:

The discussion panel comprises of:

- **Dr. Wandia Njoya, Senior Lecturer, Daystar University and Blogger**
- **Aisha Ali – Feminist, Activist**
- **Fredrick Nyagah – MENKEN**
- **Kennedy Otina - FEMNET**
- **Mariga W. Thoithi - Communication expert**
- **Stephen Machua - Change Mind Change Future**

Moderated by: Yvonne Okwara-Matole KTN Presenter

About the Gender Forum: The Gender Forum is a monthly public dialogue convened by the Heinrich Böll Stiftung since 2001, encouraging dialogue on pertinent national issues with a gendered lens. It brings together scholars, law makers and implementers, civil activists, government institutions, students and the general public, aiming at sharing knowledge and inspiring gendered analysis of policy and programmes.

Twitter: @HBSNairobi #genderforum

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¹ <https://www.wikigender.org/wiki/masculinities/>

² <https://goodmenproject.com/featured-content/what-is-toxic-masculinity-cmtt/>



HEINRICH BÖLL STIFTUNG
EAST & HORN OF AFRICA

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PROGRAMME: Tuesday 24th April 2018

Deconstructing Toxic Masculinity: What is your role?	
Time	Session
4.00 – 4.20 p.m.	Arrival and Registration
4.20 – 4.30 p.m.	Opening remarks : Ulf Terlinden , Regional Director, Heinrich Böll Stiftung (HBS)
4.30 p.m.	Panel Dialogue moderated by: Yvonne Okwara, KTN Presenter <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dr. Wandia Njoya, Senior Lecturer, Daystar University and Blogger• Aisha Ali – Feminist, Activist• Fredrick Nyagah – MENKEN• Kennedy Otina - FEMNET• Mariga W. Thoithi - Communication expert• Stephen Machua - Change Mind Change Future
6.30pm	Closing Remarks: HBS Tea and Coffee

Participate in the discussion on Twitter | @HbsNairobi #GenderForum

Note: The photographs/video taken during the forum may be used in print, on the web, on film, and/or in archived form to promote and raise awareness of the Heinrich Böll Stiftung, its offices abroad, and its affiliates in all German states

HEINRICH BÖLL STIFTUNG
EAST & HORN OF AFRICA

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