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## **Generation G launches a Men Enough campaign to encourage men to embrace healthy masculinity**

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Influenced by different waves of feminist and global advocacy for the rights of women and girls, the global community is rethinking harmful definitions of masculinity to support and empower men to embrace healthy ideals of masculinity.

Responding to this, youth network ACTIVATE! Change Drivers through its South African Coalition programme, Generation Gender (G), is embarking on a hybrid campaign to encourage men to embrace healthy masculinity through online conversations and community dialogues leading up to a men's mental health indaba, an annual event by the programme that will be held on the 23rd of November in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Through partnerships with various stakeholders, the campaign will focus on raising awareness about men's mental health and fostering a community where positive expressions of masculinity are celebrated.

Some of the planned activities include a series of engaging activities that include; community dialogues, podcasts, social media outreach, and collaborations with mental health professionals.

“The campaign seeks to facilitate critical conversations and promote healthier models of masculinity that prioritise emotional well-being. These platforms will allow men to share their stories, participate in discussions, and learn about the importance of mental health”, Zamayirha Peter, Advocacy Communications Specialist.

The campaign aims to address the critical link between masculinity and men's mental health, facilitating meaningful discussions and encouraging positive behavioural changes challenging harmful stereotypes and redefining traditional notions of masculinity.

The norms associated with masculinity profoundly influence men's behaviours, their perceptions of self, and interactions with others. This in turn has shaped their experiences and identities in significant ways. Traditional masculine norms often prescribe specific behavioural expectations for men, such as stoicism, emotional restraint, and dominance.

“We have found that in many community interventions and research we have undertaken men may feel pressure to conform to these norms to align with societal expectations of being a “real man”. As a result, men may suppress their emotions, avoid seeking help for mental health issues, or engage in risky behaviours as a means of proving their masculinity. This can have detrimental effects on their well-being and relationships”, Special Projects and Strategic Partnerships Manager, Rammolotsi Sothoane.

“An in-depth understanding of the gendered nature of men's social connections and how the interplay between masculinity and men's social connections can impact men's mental health is needed”, Sothoane, adds.



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### **Campaign Objectives:**

In line to redefine and rethink harmful versions of masculinity, and given the aims of the work done over the last two years as part of the Generation G Men's Mental Health Campaign, will seek to:

- Explore linkages between masculinity and men's mental health
- Encourage men (and others) to rethink current definitions/understandings of masculinities
- Raise awareness about the prevalence of mental health issues among men.
- Challenge stereotypes and societal expectations about masculinity that hinder men from seeking mental health support.
- Provide resources and tools for men to better understand their masculinity and manage their mental well-being.
- Encourage help-seeking behaviours and reduce the stigma associated with mental health challenges.

All activities are a build-up to the Men and Mental Health Imbizo, that will take place on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of November in Johannesburg. Now in its third year, this physical event will offer a space for men to engage in various tutorials led by organisations and men who have built a track record of work that is invested in destigmatising mental health conditions and embracing healthy masculinity.

"On the day we aim to, equip the men in the room with practical skills and insights on what healthy masculinity is and how to unlearn unhealthy and toxic masculine traits. Participants will learn about managing stress, fostering emotional intelligence, and the importance of supportive relationships in their homes and within their communities", Peter adds.

The Generation G programme calls on members of the public to join the campaign and believes that by working together, we can challenge the harmful narratives around masculinity and foster a culture that prioritises mental health for all", Sothoane adds.

### **About Generation G:**

*Generation G is a global programme implemented in seven (7) Countries namely; Morocco, Jordan, Lebanon, Rwanda, Uganda, South Africa, and the Netherlands. In creating gender-just and violence-free communities for young people in their full diversity. The Generation G South African Coalition comprises three partner organizations namely; ACTIVATE! Change Drivers, Sonke Gender Justice and ActionAid South Africa are responsible for advancing the objective of the Generation G programme in South Africa.*

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