

# Interview of the month

September 2019



Luis Lineo  
Project leader MÄN  
Sweden



**SheCanHeCan: For our readers who are not familiar with MÄN, can you explain a little about their work and objectives?**

Luis Lineo: MÄN is an organisation that started in 1993 to engage men for gender equality and against mens violence against women. We are trying to change the destructive masculinity norms so that men's violence diminishes. Our vision is a gender equal world without violence.

**Sweden is often seen to outsiders as a very progressive country particularly in regards to social issues such as gender equality. Is that something that you personally felt growing up in Sweden?**

In many ways Sweden is at the forefront of the issues regarding gender equality but still we have our challenges with unequal pay, unequal usage of the parental leave and sick leave days for children paid by the government and, not least, mens violence. Personally, when I was young, I felt the pressure to make choices that fit the stereotypical masculinity norms and in that way contributed to the violence and inequality. For example by singing sexist and songs that degrade women with my rugby team without anybody around me reacting to it and calling me out.

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**It is estimated that 35 per cent of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or sexual violence by a non-partner (not including sexual harassment) at some point in their lives. How do you explain this pandemic from Sweden's perspective and what are some of the most effective ways that we can work with men to prevent gender-based violence from occurring, especially in the home?**

We think its largely about the unequal power structures and the stereotypical gender norms, that still exist even in Sweden, not least the toxic and violent masculinity norms that have to be changed. We have to have knowledge about violence, broaden our view on what violence is and its mechanisms. We also have to learn more on how to be an active bystander and intervene when we see any violence occurring.

**Since the rise of the #MeToo movement have you seen a change in the number of people reaching out and/or attending workshops with MÄN? Do you feel this is because there is a better understanding in Sweden that equal rights is not a fight against men but rather a cause that benefits all members of society?**

We had a big influx of men engaging in our organisation and our activities after #metoo. We nearly tripled our members the first three months after the stories of women started to come out. We think it's because there are many men who felt that it was time to take the responsibility and do something about the problems raised and that it was about them. I also think that we had a language and communication towards them that included them.

We have also seen an increase in people, companies and civil society organisations asking for the knowledge and methods to prevent sexualized violence so they can improve their working environment.

**Can you tell us how MÄN's programs work to engage men as fathers? Including how can fathers be encouraged to take longer paternity leave and be involved in the early years of their children?**

We have had fathers groups and methods to work with new fathers and soon to be fathers for about fifteen years. There have been groups that self-organized with our help and groups that childcare and maternity care centers have offered fathers in connection with the birth of a child.

Basically we create safe spaces where new fathers can talk about their feelings, hopes and fears, practical issues and challenges when it comes to having a child. It's all done from a child-perspective and what a newly born child needs from a parent and how the relationship can change with a new member in the family. All this makes fathers want to be more with their children and more equally share more the responsibilities at home. Studies also show that this work prevents violence in families.

## What does the future look like for MÄN?

We hope to grow even more and to be a stable organisation both from a professional and civil society perspective. Even though things are progressing there is also more and more opposition and political forces that can come to power and decide to change the gender equality policies and documents that still have broad support from the citizens and politicians and that help us to do what we do.

I personally think that work and engagement speaks for itself and that we will continue to work systematically, sustainably and with a long term vision for a gender equal world without violence.

# About Luis Lineo

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Luis Lineo, former president of MÄN, sexuality educator, journalist and trainer. Works at Fanzingo, a media house for youth in a non-privileged area south of Stockholm. Parent to two children.

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