

*** GUEST CONTRIBUTION ***
*** WEB TALK ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION ***



Feminist Foreign Policy –
Rights. Resources. Representation.

The Role of Men and Boys in a Feminist Foreign Policy

In the face of COVID-19 and global economic declines, the progress toward full equality for women and girls has stalled. Data from 142 studies in 44 countries point to an alarming increase in men's violence against women during COVID-19.ⁱ COVID-19 lockdowns have also thrown care inequalities into stark relief. Globally, women do three to ten times more unpaid care and domestic work¹ than men.ⁱⁱ They also make up 70 percent of the global paid care workforce but represent only 25 percent of senior roles.ⁱⁱⁱ At the current rate of change, the world is at least 92 years away from achieving equality in unpaid care work between men and women.^{iv} Globally, women's political participation – a key indicator of women's full equality has also stalled. Women were only 25.6 percent of parliamentarians globally as of January 2021.^v Behind these numbers is the ongoing inequitable power, privilege and gender norms related to masculinities. Women's economic, social and political inequality is inequality relative to men, whether men who hold political and economic power, or men in their household and intimate lives. In spite of this obvious affirmation, the role of men and boys – as obstacles or allies, and the need for policies to support changing masculinities and men's attitudes and behaviors – has been limited.

The Policy Platforms Necessary to Engage Men and Boys as Allies

The good news behind these affirmations is that there is a growing evidence base of the policies and scaled up programming that can engage men and boys, and that can lead to measurable change.

- *Gender-Based Violence Prevention.* A growing evidence based has confirmed that well-designed, gender transformative group education and bystander intervention approaches (in which men are trained and encouraged to call out or speak out when they see other men using violence against women) can be effective. Parent training programs, particularly those that engage fathers either at the community level or via the health sector or workplaces have also been shown to lead to reductions in men's use of violence against women. "What Works" (<https://www.whatworks.co.za/>) and other initiatives have steadily increased the evidence base of approaches that engage women and men, boys and girls, in measurable decreases in gender-based violence prevention. In addition, psycho-social support approaches that seek to break the intergenerational transmission of violence by offering specific support for children and youth who have witnessed or experienced violence in their homes, can also be effective.

¹ "Caregiving" and "care work" refer to the care of children, older adults, people with disabilities, or ill family members in the home setting. "Paid care work" and "paid caregiving" refer to care provided in the context of work, payment, or as a profession. "Domestic work," refers more specifically to cleaning, food preparation, and similar tasks that are related to care work.

For a Feminist Foreign Policy platform, the key question becomes: how can donor countries ensure that their development assistance includes appropriate funding and technical support for adequately resourcing the scale up of GBV prevention, including national monitoring of progress toward GBV prevention.

- **Achieving Care Equality:** Unpaid care work is perhaps the largest impediment to women's full economic equality relative to men. A study by the International Labour Organization (ILO) found that prior to the pandemic, 42 percent of women said their unpaid care work responsibilities left them unable to do paid work compared to 6 percent of men.

Achieving men's greater participation in caregiving involves both holding **individual** men accountable for their actions and, more crucially, transformations in the **structural** factors that drive and influence the value of care in society and who undertakes that work. These factors include changes in laws and policies, with adequate resourcing and clear implementation plans; changes in institutions, such as schools, workplaces, and health facilities, and the ways that they work; changes in culture, narratives, and gendered norms around care work; and changes in our public and private lives and livelihoods. Based on the most recent State of the World's Fathers (2021)^{vi}, produced by Promundo-US, there are seven key policy actions necessary to achieve men's equality in care work ranging from putting national care policies and campaigns that recognize, reduce, and redistribute care work equally between men and women in place to holding male political leaders accountable for their support of care policies, while advocating for women's equality in political leadership.

For a Feminist Foreign Policy platform, the key question becomes: how can donor countries ensure that their development assistance includes appropriate funding and technical support for implementing national care policies and actions that achieve progress toward care equality, including affirming national and global targets that men and boys will carry out on aggregate 50% of unpaid care work, and include in those plans national monitoring of progress toward care equality.

As a final comment, many discussions about the role of men and boys in gender equality – in policy platforms and gender equality activism – have promoted the idea of men as “champions.” Such approaches can be useful for starting a conversation but too often do not move to the level of the meaningful actions we need for structural actions to achieve gender equality. For male allyship in gender equality to be meaningful and effective, it must be accountable and in partnership with key women's rights groups and platforms, and be taken up to the policy level. Feminist Foreign Policy platforms provide a strategic opportunity for key governments to make this a reality and in the process push the world closer to gender equality with benefits for women, men, boys and girls and individuals of all gender identities.



Gary Barker, PhD

CEO of Promundo-US and steering committee member for the coalition for a Feminist Foreign Policy in the United States

ⁱ O'Donnell, M. (2020, November 24). *Preventing a “return to normal”: Addressing violence against women during COVID-19*. Center for Global Development. <https://www.cgdev.org/blog/preventing-return-normal-addressing-violence-against-women-during-covid-19>

ⁱⁱ Addati, L., Cattaneo, U., Esquivel, V., & Valarino, I. (2018, June 28). *Care work and care jobs for the future of decent work*. International Labour Organization. http://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_633135/lang--en/index.htm

ⁱⁱⁱ World Health Organization. (2019, March 20). *10 key issues in ensuring gender equity in the global health workforce*. <https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/detail/10-key-issues-in-ensuring-gender-equity-in-the-global-health-workforce>

^{iv} Charmes, J. (2019, December 19). *The unpaid care work and the labour market: An analysis of time use data based on the latest world compilation of time-use surveys*. International Labour Organization. http://www.ilo.org/gender/informationresources/Publications/WCMS_732791/lang--en/index.htm

^v IPU Parline. (2021, January 1). *Global and regional averages of women in national parliaments*. Inter-Parliamentary Union. <https://data.ipu.org/women-averages>

^{vi} https://promundoglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/210610_BLS21042_PRO_SOWF.v08.pdf