

THE STOCKHOLM FORUM ON GENDER EQUALITY

# ACHIEVING EQUALITY IN UNPAID CARE: HOW TO ENGAGE MEN AS EQUITABLE, NON-VIOLENT CAREGIVERS

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## OVERVIEW

Globally, women carry out an average of three times the daily unpaid care work than men. Even counting both unpaid and paid work, women work more hours than men in every country in the world. This imbalance is a key driver of women's limited participation in the paid work force, keeps women out of leadership positions and is one of the leading drivers of gender inequality. No country has achieved an equitable division of unpaid care work. Most discussions focus on reducing it rather than redistributing it by promoting men's and boys' involvement. This session brought up the largest barriers, success stories and the main priorities going forward.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

### Where are we?

The inequality in home care is a huge driver and a contributor to poverty in the world.

When men are involved in daily caregiving, women get more opportunities within the workplace, and children develop better socially.

Today:

- Women carry out an average of three times the daily unpaid care work compared to men.
- In the Middle East, women do 4.5 times more unpaid work than men, and in South Asia that number is 6.5 times. Scandinavian countries and Canada are considered to perform better, but even in these countries women do twice the amount of unpaid care work compared to men – showing that even they haven't achieved equality yet.
- The disproportions are larger in poorer countries compared to more developed and wealthier countries. The same goes for poorer households with a lower level of education compared to households with larger incomes and a higher level of education.
- Stereotypes of gender roles as well as a lack of adequate laws and policies on equal salaries and wages contribute to the disproportion as well. Men's higher wages mean that families continue to prioritise the income of men rather than that of women when economic opportunities are limited.

### **Russia**

Today women are paid 62 per cent of an average salary of men. The tradition of a the so-called 'double employment of women', meaning that women work both at home and at a workplace, is still very much present in today's society, and traditional gender roles are the norm. The younger generation has slightly different values, but in practice it's still the same – with the consequence that women do much more unpaid work at home. Showing alternatives of men's roles is a good way to break stereotypes. Only in S:t Petersburg men can participate in childbirth for free (in other areas they need to pay). There are active and aggressive groups defending traditional values. At the same time, women have strong gender stereotypes that sometimes stop men from participating in unpaid work. In order to achieve change, it's important to use data and statistics, like the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES), showing the benefits of men's involvement in caregiving.

### **Sweden**

Both partners are able to take equally long parental leave. Parental leave has been individualised, meaning men have a separate and non-transferable amount of parental leave. The conception that fathers are not supposed to take parental leave doesn't exist anymore. Still, men don't usually take as much parental leave as women – on average only 2–3 months. In order to create a platform of change, fathers' groups are very important as they offer a space for men to learn how to care, to practice caregiving and for this to become something which is seen as normal – creating new norms in society. The training of staff in public services such as child care and maternity health is also of vital importance.

### **South Africa**

If the upcoming amendment passes, fathers will get ten days of paid parental leave, but we are trying to push it even further.

Clear recommendations are in place when we try to get fathers to understand how important they are for their children. Again, the importance of father training is huge.

Physical punishment of children is still a common practice in homes but is no longer allowed in schools. It is important to focus not only on fathers participating in child care but also on ensuring that their participation is non-violent.

### **Latin America**

Public policy promotes a maternalistic culture in which only women have the right to take parental leave. The state doesn't integrate men into childcare or household work. National governments don't see the need to make parental leave available for fathers, and they are actively pushing back feminist policies. There is a very strong connection to the traditional family ideology. Once again, it is of great importance to use data and statistics to show how unpaid care work keeps women out of the labour market – and the importance of training fathers to make real change.

### **Europe**

It became clear for governments that we will never reach true gender equality unless we change the situation regarding unpaid care- and household work for women. Today economic issues receive greater attention, and we know that parental leave needs to be

non-transferable if change is to take place. As long as a choice is given, there will always be some stigma connected to 'alternative ways' and include some kind of negotiation regarding the financial situation (with men earning more money).

Through research it has become clear that parental leave needs to be well paid, and this question is of course closely connected to the family budget. Men's higher wages clearly continues to make this choice a big hurdle. A larger number of fathers are taking the opportunity of parental leave if national welfare systems offer more attractive financial solutions for the families.

### **What are we doing?**

#### **Russia**

Fatherhood programmes: offering fathers information and the opportunity to attend educational programmes before becoming a father. These have become increasingly popular.

Gender awareness trainings are being organised, and we are fighting stereotypes amongst both men and women. Through the national strategy of social development of advanced women, we enter the area of the unpaid market and fight stereotypes there as well.

#### **Sweden**

Father groups are attended by thousands of men and the trend shows that men take more and more of the parental leave.

As men take more responsibility of childcare and household work, this will contribute to a more equal labour market and more equal salaries.

#### **South Africa**

There is cooperation with Tanzania and Uganda through Fathers Support, promoting the strengthening of families.

#### **Latin America**

NGOs and activists are promoting the parenthood programmes to reduce the inequality provided by local laws. The programmes encourage fathers to dedicate more time to their families and children, and to share the household duties with the women. We are trying to involve men with the health care system and promote a policy that allows fathers to be present during childbirth.

#### **Europe**

We want women to increase their work hours – and do less part-time work. Employers face a demographic challenge (extra emergency leaves, etc.). It's not only about caring but also about requalifying ourselves. We are pushing for this policy to be known by everyone.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Where do we go from here?

- Adequate policies and well-paid parental leave is needed to build an equal society.
- Changing national legislation to provide both men and women with equal opportunities when it comes to salaries and parental leave opportunities.
- The parental leave should be non-transferable.
- Fight the stereotypes of the 'traditional family' and 'genders roles' that both men and women have.
- Engage men to take longer parental leave and raise the awareness that both parents are equally important for their kids' growing environment.
- Promote educative parenthood programmes across the world.
- Encourage women to take more paid work hours.
- Engage the private sector to be more flexible when it comes to any kind of leave.
- Keep policies grounded in a do-no-harm perspective and implement feminist policies of promoting women's equal wages, improved working conditions and prevention mechanisms on gender-based violence. ■

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