



# Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
11 December 2023

Original: English

---

## Commission on the Status of Women

Sixty-eighth session

11–22 March 2024

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”

### Statement submitted by Promundo-US and Rutgers, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council\*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

---

\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## Statement

Rutgers works in more than 29 countries on research, advocacy, and promoting public support. We do this to improve access to sexuality education and information, contraception and safe abortion services, and to prevent sexual and gender-based violence. We have had special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council since 2004.

Promundo-US (Equimundo): Center for Masculinities and Social Justice has worked internationally and in the US since 2011 to engage men and boys as allies in gender equality, promote healthy manhood, and prevent violence. Equimundo works to achieve gender equality and social justice by transforming intergenerational patterns of harm and promoting patterns of care, empathy, and accountability among boys and men throughout their lives.

### **‘We need men to care’**

Care is undervalued by public decision makers and the private sector in communities across the world. Care is at the center of all of our lives – all people receive care in one way or another. Historically women do more care work at home, spending more time on physical and emotional childcare, cooking, and caring for their partners or older adults. The undervaluing of care is no coincidence. Social structures and mindsets in patriarchal societies result in women bearing the responsibility of most care work. Findings from the 2023 State of the World’s Fathers report, produced by Equimundo for the MenCare Global Fatherhood Campaign, show the tension at the heart of people’s experiences of care – on one hand, women and men associate care with positive words like ‘help, compassion, and empathy.’ On the other hand, there is a lack of sufficient support for care needs, especially for women and other marginalized populations. As evidence has shown, care work can often be laborious, and the time women spend on care duties reduces the time they are able to spend on their own emotional and physical needs, as well as participating in political and public life. At the same time, men show better mental health outcomes when they are more engaged in caregiving.

In order to move away from the unequal distribution of care work, to unlock many women’s potential to participate politically and publicly, and to support men to find meaning and purpose in care we need institutions and policies to support men’s involvement in care. We need men not only to understand how important care is, but to advocate alongside women for supportive care policies and men’s increased engagement in care work. As Sima Bahous, the executive director of UN Women wrote in the foreword to the SOWF 2023 report:

“Care must be at the center of political, social, and economic plans and spending – and built into structures and institutions. Women have been asking for this for decades. When men do the same, together, we can change our world so that care is at the center of everything we do.”

We call on Member States to put care before profit: individual change is not enough; policies need to support equality in care as well. Supporting men’s engagement in care requires an enabling policy environment that includes equal, paid parental leave for all parents and other policies like improved health system policies to enables fathers accompanying mothers to antenatal services. Without enabling structures to support individual caregivers there will be no gender equality. The SOWF2023 research from Equimundo in 17 countries with nearly 12,000 people affirmed that men and women are willing to take action to do more, but that many barriers to this equal sharing remain. In addition to leave, and health system reforms, state-supported high-quality childcare allows all parents and caregivers more time for work and self-care. Families cannot afford to lose the income of one or both parents and without paid parental leave they are less likely to take time to spend with their

newborns. Special attention should be given to fathers taking up their leave, as they often earn more money and face stigma from managers and co-workers when taking time off work to spend time with their family.

### **The positive social outcomes of comprehensive sexuality education**

Due to among others lower literacy, less schooling, and less access to online information it is more difficult for people living in underserved and impoverished communities to access information and education about a variety of subjects. Let alone about gender stereotypes in care and relationships. Research has shown the positive social outcomes for all genders of having access to this kind of information and education in preventing and reducing gender-based and intimate partner violence, reducing harmful gender stereotypes, reducing unplanned pregnancies, and young people making more conscious decisions when it comes to their intimate relationships, such as using contraceptives. We therefore call on Member States to commit to accelerate efforts to scale up comprehensive sexuality education in primary and secondary schools.

We applaud the Commission on the Status of Women for recognizing the disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work of women and girls repeatedly, including last year (specifically in paragraph tt and uu). It has recognized the implications for women and girls' social and economic empowerment as they have less time to engage in education, employment, public and political life and the economy. The Commission acknowledged that measures should be taken to recognize, reduce and redistribute as well as to value unpaid care and domestic work to determine its contribution to the national economy. They have referred to the promotion of men's and boy's equitable sharing of responsibilities with respect to care and household work, including men's responsibilities as fathers and caregivers. But not only have they stressed the need for these kinds of policies, they also stressed the need to promote men's awareness and incentivizing their use of such opportunities when social protection was the theme of the resolution. The Commission also stressed that for this imbalance to shift it requires flexibility in working arrangements, support to breastfeeding mothers, paid parental and other leave schemes, accessible, affordable, high-quality social services and childcare facilities.

In summary, the Commission has recognized the importance of promoting equal sharing of household responsibilities, supporting caregivers, improving infrastructure, enacting family-friendly policies, valuing unpaid work, and challenging gender stereotypes to empower women and girls in the modern world.

### **Putting the words of the Agreed Conclusions into action**

For this year's Agreed Conclusions we stress that though references have been plenty, we have seen only few Member States improve their social protection policies regarding care. We need Member States to provide paid parental leave and other leave schemes, health system reforms, and state supported childcare. If these are not provided then women and girls will continue to carry out all care duties and will not be able to participate in education, employment, public and political life and the economy. Simultaneously, men will remain disconnected and isolated, with poor mental health outcomes.

And then lastly, for those reading this who identify as male, we encourage you to reflect on the time you are spending on care and household tasks in relation to female family members. The MenCare 50/50 Commitments offer an opportunity for government departments, employers and individual men to demonstrate their commitment to equal care. Based on years of evidence from the State of the World's Fathers reports, the commitments can offer a blueprint for this vital change.