



MenCare

STATE OF THE FIELD

Critical Insights from the MenCare Global Meeting 2017

Belgrade, Serbia • June 8-10, 2017

#MenCare2017

www.men-care.org





MenCare: State of the Field

Critical Insights from the MenCare Global Meeting 2017

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ABOUT MENCARE: MenCare is a global campaign to promote men's and boys' involvement as equitable, nonviolent caregivers. With activities in more than 45 countries, MenCare partners carry out joint advocacy initiatives, research, and programming to engage men in positive parenting, in equitable caregiving, in violence prevention, and in maternal, newborn, and child health. MenCare is coordinated by Promundo and Sonke Gender Justice in collaboration with steering committee members Save the Children Sweden, Oxfam GB, and MenEngage Alliance.

For more information about the campaign and its partners, visit MenCare at: men-care.org

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1. INTRODUCTION

The everyday act of caring is at the heart of a fundamental social issue of our time: wherever you are in the world, women do more unpaid care work on average than men do. Not only does this exclude women from areas of paid work, it also distances fathers from their children and deters men from taking a supportive and emotionally connected role in the lives of their loved ones. Simply put, the way we distribute care within families and communities creates a deep and lasting foundation for gender inequality.

A radical shift is taking place in societies around the world, however, with traditional gender roles being challenged more than ever before. Since launching in 2011, the global MenCare campaign has been a leading advocate for this change, highlighting the importance of equal caregiving for gender justice.

The campaign now reaches more than 45 countries around the globe, with MenCare partners at the forefront of initiatives engaging men in care work for the purpose of gender justice, and advocating for this change at all levels. While this work often goes against prevailing political currents, MenCare partners have developed creative and innovative approaches to drive positive changes forward.

In June 2017, MenCare held its second global meeting to pool this collective knowledge and find new ways forward together. Around 100 practitioners, activists, and researchers from more than 30 countries, and representing a diversity of world regions, met in Belgrade, Serbia to discuss the state of the field and learn from a wealth of international experiences working towards gender equality through engaging men in care work. As well as providing a rare chance for global experts in the field to come together for plenary sessions, workshops, and group discussion, the meeting saw the launch of [*State of the World's Fathers: Time for Action*](#), MenCare's second report on global trends in men's caregiving and fatherhood, which lays out an advocacy action plan that all MenCare partners can use.

Inspired by strategic insights and tips for best practice, many participants left the meeting with new tools and ideas to take forward in their own work. This report aims to capture these ideas so they can be shared among all who work in the rapidly growing field of engaging men in caregiving to promote gender equality.



2. GLOBAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE PAST SIX YEARS

Since launching in 2011, MenCare has grown from seven countries in the campaign's first year to a global initiative active in more than 45 countries today. Through innovative programming, global and community-driven campaigns, and targeted advocacy, **MenCare has reached millions of individuals and changed the lives of people around the world.**

MenCare is receiving global attention with concrete changes related to gender equality in global and national agendas. MenCare's first [State of the World's Fathers](#) report, launched in June 2015, has become a recognized, global advocacy tool highlighting data, policies, and programs related to men's participation in caregiving and fatherhood. Regional launches in 10 cities around the world – including at the United States Congress and parliaments in Sweden, the United Kingdom, and Brazil – led to widespread attention for the campaign on prominent news outlets with an estimated combined circulation of two billion.

Resulting from MenCare's advocacy, new parental leave policies have been discussed or implemented in the Netherlands, Brazil, and South Africa, and the [MenCare Parental Leave Platform](#) was launched at the United Nations in March 2016 during the 60th session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

MenCare continues to engage in high-visibility work, from the Clinton Global Initiative to TEDx Barcelona, where the campaign reaches and influences policy makers, thought leaders, and the media on issues ranging from men's engagement in prenatal health visits to paid parental leave policies as a key foundation for gender-justice goals.

2011

MenCare campaign launched and coordinated by Promundo and Sonke Gender Justice

2013

First MenCare Global Meeting

First 25 countries join the campaign

2015

First-ever *State of the World's Fathers* report launched

2017

45 countries working on national-level MenCare campaigns

Second-ever *State of the World's Fathers* report launched

Second MenCare Global Meeting

3. STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE

The MenCare Global Meeting 2017 saw experts from diverse regions of the world sharing their strategic approaches to achieving a gender-equitable division of care work. While there is no single path forward, the strategies summarized on the next page – and explored more deeply throughout this report with examples from around the world – outline some of the innovative and creative approaches taken by MenCare partners, as well as the hurdles they have overcome so far.

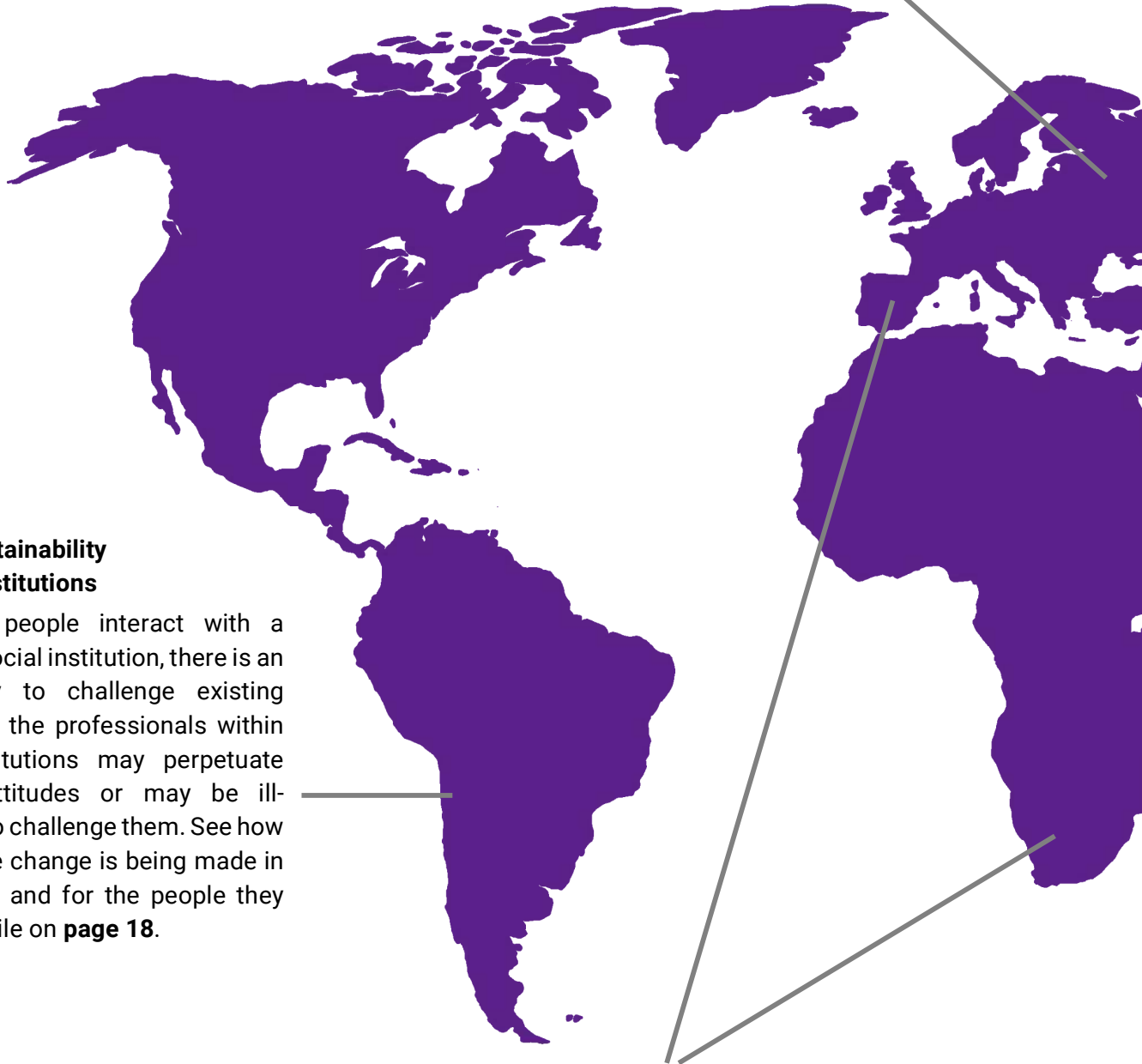


EXAMPLES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

MenCare partners shared examples of strategic approaches from around the world at the MenCare Global Meeting 2017, summarized here and explored in depth in the following sections.

Reflect on and transform rigid gender norms

Changing individual behaviors can only be truly meaningful and sustainable if it is through a gender-transformative approach. That means reflecting on and challenging rigid, gendered attitudes and behaviors, rather than simply responding to the problems they cause. See **page 26** for how Center ANNA encourages fathers to question traditional norms in Russia.



Create sustainability through institutions

Whenever people interact with a health or social institution, there is an opportunity to challenge existing norms. Yet the professionals within these institutions may perpetuate harmful attitudes or may be ill-equipped to challenge them. See how sustainable change is being made in institutions and for the people they serve in Chile on **page 18**.

Advocate for equal, non-transferrable parental leave

A gender-equitable division of care will remain an unreachable goal as long as parental leave policies create the structures and environments that place the sole onus of childcare on mothers. Evidence shows that well-designed leave policies have a positive impact on the redistribution of care work. See **page 10** for critical insights from PLENT, including the need to call on policy makers to prioritize equal, non-transferrable parental leave. See **page 11** for how Sonke Gender Justice made gains on this in South Africa.

Turn research into action

In certain situations, building a context-specific and participatory evidence base can be done with relatively few resources, but the impact on outcomes can be profound. See how Oxfam helps put research on women's economic empowerment into practice on **page 15**.

Wide-ranging studies like the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) reveal men's and women's attitudes and practices on a wide range of gender-related topics. Read how IMAGES is bringing new understanding to gender perceptions in the Middle East and North Africa on **page 16**.

Work with religious and community leaders

Religions are a pivotal aspect of community life for billions of people around the world. They often provide tangible guidance, including through significant life events such as becoming a parent. In Vietnam, CSAGA is working alongside religious and community leaders, whose influential voice on family life is a crucial entry point for positive fatherhood. Read more on **page 23**.

Communicate for change

Using communications as a strategic tool is a challenge and opportunity for all organizations working on engaging men in care work and in gender equality in general. Read about an innovative radio broadcasting project from Hiwot Ethiopia on **page 21**.

4. ADVOCATING FOR EQUAL, NON-TRANSFERRABLE PARENTAL LEAVE

4.1 Key points from the MenCare Global Meeting 2017

Insights

Globally, women and girls spend an average of three times longer than men and boys do on unpaid care work

This pattern deepens when couples have children, with women more likely to make career sacrifices to raise them

Well-designed parental leave policies can address this inequity

Challenges

Fathers tend to only take parental leave if it is non-transferrable and paid at least 80 percent of their salary

It is not always easy to make parental leave a priority at government levels

Achievements

Concerted lobbying efforts have led to policy conversations or policy changes in a number of countries, including South Africa, the Netherlands, and Brazil

Recommendations

Advocating for equal, paid, non-transferable, job-protected parental leave for all caregivers is a central component of work in this field

Lobbying efforts should be well-planned, drawing on multiple tools and approaches relevant to the political context

[State of the World's Fathers: Time for Action](#), launched at the MenCare Global Meeting 2017, shows that women around the world spend, on average, three times longer than men do on unpaid care.¹ While this is caused by social pressures based on traditional gender roles, it is also reinforced at a structural level by the lack of equitable parental leave policies, pushing women out of the paid workforce and into unpaid care work. These policies inhibit women's empowerment and keep fathers from taking part in their fair share of caregiving responsibilities and the rewards of parenthood in the crucial first few months of a child's life – a stage of parenthood that shapes longer-term patterns of parental caregiving.

At the MenCare meeting, Monika Queisser from the [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development](#) (OECD) showed why there is a need for equitable parental leave policies. In Germany, for example, men and women in partnered relationships – but without children – spend a similar amount of time each day in paid work. The picture is very different for couples with children, however, with men doing significantly more paid work and women significantly more unpaid work.² In other words, gender gaps widen when children enter the equation. This is a trend echoed across the countries analyzed by OECD, showing why fair and equitable parental leave policies should be a key policy ask for organizations advocating for change in this field.

Despite the huge challenge in achieving equality in care work and employment, evidence shows that well-designed parental leave policies can have a long-lasting impact. María Pazos, of the [International Platform for Equal, Non-Transferable, and Fully Paid Parental Leave](#) (PLENT), took to the stage at the MenCare meeting to discuss the necessary requirements for effective leave policies. For example, Pazos explained that most fathers only take leave when it is both non-transferrable and paid at more than 80 percent of their salary. Otherwise, because of social and economic pressures, they minimize their time away from paid work while mothers lose out professionally and continue to be seen as “high-risk” employees. In

“We should not need this economic argument. We should just be able to argue in terms of moral, human rights, societal arguments, but the economic argument does work and this is something where OECD is contributing.”

– Monika Queisser, Senior Counsellor and Head of Social Policy Division, OECD Employment, Labour, and Social Affairs Directorate

Spain, for instance, only 55 percent of mothers return to work after parental leave, compared to 100 percent of men.³ Promisingly, Pazos explained that many governments and international authorities recognize that equal use of parental leave by men and women is a pre-condition for gender equality.

Thanks to a growing recognition of the need for equal parental leave, influential organizations like the OECD are advocating

¹ *State of the World's Fathers: Time for Action* is available at sowf.men-care.org

² Extensive data from the OECD Gender Portal is available at oecd.org/gender

³ Data shared by María Pazos at the MenCare Global Meeting 2017. Watch her address the meeting at bit.ly/MenCare-MPazos

for longer leave for fathers to support women's advancement at work, which acts as a boost for economic growth. The paid-leave policy debate within the OECD has moved away from focusing solely on leave for mothers to include longer leave for fathers as well.

The foremost policy recommendation of *State of the World's Fathers: Time for Action* is that governments (and failing that, employers, corporations, and others in the private sector) provide equal, paid, non-transferable, job-protected parental leave for all caregivers, in accordance with the best standards of such policies.

4.2 Lobbying for leave in South Africa

The South African organization [Sonke Gender Justice](#) and partners have been lobbying for several years on the issue of parental leave. Wessel van den Berg from Sonke discussed their approach and some of the key achievements to date at the MenCare Global Meeting 2017.⁴

There are around seven million children under the age of five in South Africa. The task of caring for them, Van den Berg explained, mostly falls on women, who do eight times more household and childcare work on average than men do.

While mothers are entitled to take four months of parental leave (paid out of a personal, self-invested unemployment insurance fund), there was no similar leave for fathers or other non-birth-giving parents in South Africa at the time of the MenCare meeting. Yet, in a 2015 legal ruling, a court in Durban granted a father in a same-sex couple leave equivalent to that allowed for biological mothers. This landmark ruling helped reveal the contradiction of having gendered parental leave policies in a world no longer restricted to traditional family types.

Parental leave is principally a structural issue that needs to be addressed through systemic change. Drawing on the *MenCare Parental Leave Platform* and the 2015 *State of the World's Fathers* report, and partnering with both women's rights and trade union organizations, Sonke and partners developed a parental leave recommendation for the South African parliament. When the time came for parliament to consider the relevant changes, lobbying by Sonke and partners went straight to the heart of decision-making, by targeting each member of the South African parliament with printed materials and a DVD making the case for an amendment to the existing labor laws.

The technicalities of their proposal – for 10 days of perinatal leave (paid at 100 percent) and six months of parental leave (paid at 75 percent) to be taken in the first three years – were backed by the story of a mother who gave a personal testimony to parliament on the benefits of her husband joining her in taking parental leave at the beginning of their child's life.

⁴ Watch Wessel van den Berg address the MenCare Global Meeting 2017 at bit.ly/MenCare-WvdBerg

This concerted lobbying effort led to the passing of the Labour Laws Amendment Bill – a landmark achievement for all parents in South Africa – in November 2017.

Crucially, rather than calling for paternity leave, Sonke advocated for the new allowances to be for two named parents, regardless of their genders. The new bill keeps maternity leave in place, but there is now up to 10 days of paid leave for all parents who do not qualify for maternity leave – the largest group to benefit being fathers. Sonke also secured improvements for parents adopting children, whose parental leave was not previously granted until the necessary paperwork was in place, which is often months after a child is placed with adoptive parents.

“I think the landmark achievement is not necessarily the amount of time [for parental leave], but it’s the fact that we achieved non-gendered language. The bill speaks about parental leave and not maternity versus paternity leave.”

– *Wessel van den Berg, Sonke Gender Justice*



5. TURNING RESEARCH INTO ACTION

5.1 Key points from the MenCare Global Meeting 2017

Insights

Women consistently earn less than men and are concentrated in the lowest-paid and least-secure work

Gender equality needs to be seen in the broader picture of economic inequality

Challenges

Broad trends of inequality are built on socio-economic and cultural norms, which are difficult to pinpoint

Many people do not see the true social and economic value of care work

Achievements

Research initiatives like IMAGES are generating insights into gendered attitudes and behaviors in countries around the world, informing current and future programs that promote men's involvement in caregiving

Recommendations

Understanding social norms is key to addressing gender-related issues

Certain research tools and methods can be built into existing programs with relatively minimal resources, but significant potential impact

Research results can highlight the value of care work and help shift attitudes towards both paid and unpaid work

“There used to be a time when everybody was assuming that all women were the same. There’s also the danger of assuming that all men are the same, and actually we know that they’re not, and that men’s experiences of power are contradictory.”

– Nikki van der Gaag,
Director of Gender
Justice and Women’s
Rights, Oxfam



Promoting men’s unpaid care work is not simply about bringing gender equality into the home. It is pivotal to women’s empowerment at all levels of society. Yet in all regions of the world, equality in the workforce is held back by a context in which women consistently earn less than men and are concentrated in the lowest paid and least secure forms of work.⁵

Oxfam’s Nikki van der Gaag gave a picture of the global reality of women’s economic empowerment at the MenCare Global Meeting 2017.⁶ According to many analysts, progress on this issue remains stubbornly slow, with the World Economic Forum projecting that it will take another 170 years to achieve equality – and some areas are in fact moving backwards.⁷ This gender-based issue, Van der Gaag explained, needs to be seen in the broader picture of global economic inequality and poverty: the fact that just eight men possess as much money as the world’s poorest 3.6 billion people acts as a stark reminder of the depth of the global economic disparity.

⁵ Oxfam (2017). *An Economy That Works for Women*.

⁶ Watch Nikki van der Gaag address the MenCare Global Meeting 2017 at bit.ly/MenCare-NvdGaag

⁷ World Economic Forum (2016). *Global Gender Gap Report*.

5.2 Understanding social norms is key to effective local change

Underneath these structural differences is a culture of socio-cultural and economic norms that prop up broad inequalities and the profound gender divide. Understanding social norms is key to addressing the issue at all levels, and it is one aim of the [Oxfam Women's Economic Empowerment and Care](#) (WE-Care) project. Anam Parvez, Gender Justice Researcher at Oxfam, explained to those at the MenCare Global Meeting 2017 meeting how the WE-Care methodology develops context-specific social norms research as the foundation for effective programmatic change towards women's economic empowerment.⁸

Specifically, WE-Care aims to make the value of care work more visible and, in doing so, improve outcomes for women's economic empowerment. First, the program's Rapid Care Analysis assessment, involving active participation of women and men, helps identify the ways care work is distributed in households and communities.⁹ It then aims to make the findings visible, exposing how unequal care responsibilities impact women's time, health, and mobility. Finally, this evidence is used to identify practical interventions to help women participate fully and benefit equally from development programs.

"In certain dimensions of economic decision-making, we find that social norms are actually more powerful than economic incentives, deterrents, or costs."

– Anam Parvez, Gender Justice Researcher, Oxfam

The Rapid Care Analysis methodology was developed by Oxfam and partners over several years, with learnings from more than 20 countries. Designed to be easily implemented across regions and cultures, it is now available for anyone interested in undertaking a participatory assessment of the patterns of care within any given context. WE-Care can be incorporated within existing tools and programs, helping organizations develop a research base with limited demands on already-stretched resources. This approach leads to local solutions that are both relevant to the context and inclusive of the community.

Typically, programs that adopt the WE-Care methodology produce evidence-based outputs aimed at advocacy, creating community role models, media campaigns, and educational materials – all directed at producing better outcomes for women's economic empowerment through the equal distribution of care.

⁸ Watch Anam Parvez address the MenCare Global Meeting 2017 at bit.ly/MenCare-AParvez

⁹ Oxfam's Rapid Care Assessment resources and methodology are available at policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk

5.3 Looking at IMAGES: Global research on local attitudes

For the past decade, the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES), co-coordinated by [Promundo](#) and the [International Center for Research on Women](#) (ICRW), has been used to explore men's and women's gendered attitudes and behaviors. IMAGES (and IMAGES-inspired) studies have now been carried out in more than 30 countries, shedding new light on how gender is practiced, understood, and viewed in societies around the world.

At the MenCare Global Meeting 2017, delegates heard how Lena Karlsson¹⁰ from UN Women has, in partnership with Promundo, applied the IMAGES survey to the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. In her talk, Karlsson shared the key findings that bring new insights to a region in which women's rights work has traditionally had little focus on transforming harmful masculinities.

IMAGES is one of the most comprehensive studies ever on men's and women's beliefs and practices as they relate to gender norms, attitudes toward gender-equality policies, household dynamics including caregiving and men's involvement as fathers, intimate partner violence, health, economic stress, and more.

IMAGES MENA captured household data from 10,000 women and men from Egypt, Morocco, Palestine, and Lebanon. Among other groundbreaking findings, IMAGES MENA helped reveal the factors associated with more gender-equitable attitudes. For instance, wealthier or more educated men, men whose mothers were more educated, and men whose fathers carried out more traditionally feminine tasks in their childhood homes showed the most gender-equitable beliefs.

Partners implementing IMAGES studies are creating a rich database to inform policy and programmatic interventions. For example, most men in the MENA region would like to have at least two weeks of paternity leave. With research findings like this, UN Women and its partners in the MENA region are able to more effectively develop evidence-based programs, advocate for policy change, and create meaningful community outreach and social media campaigns.

"Engaging men and boys is not just asking men to come and work with us. We also really need to know what men think about gender equality and what it means to be a man."

– Lena Karlsson, Program Manager
UN Women, Arab States Regional
office

¹⁰ Watch Lena Karlsson address the MenCare Global Meeting 2017 at bit.ly/MenCare-LKarlsson

6. SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH INSTITUTIONS

6.1 Key points from the MenCare Global Meeting 2017

Insights

Gender attitudes of professionals working in sectors such as healthcare impact the way they deliver services

Institutions can have a significant impact on the gender norms of people who use public services, such as new and expectant parents

Challenges

Maternal, newborn, and child health providers often overlook the importance of active, engaged, and caring partners and fathers

Achievements

Institutions' relationships (or lack thereof) with fathers in maternal, newborn, and child health is shifting thanks to programs aiming to transform gender norms in the public-health sector

Recommendations

Training healthcare professionals to work in more gender-equitable ways leads to positive change for members of the public using those services

This kind of work requires both top-level approaches as well as working with individuals on the front line of public institutions

The way health and social institutions work with men and women – particularly around maternal, newborn, and child health – can have a significant influence on either reinforcing or challenging inequitable gender norms. New and expectant parents' interactions with health institutions, for example, represent valuable entry points to tackle harmful attitudes and behaviors, such as the view that supporting a healthy pregnancy is only a woman's

responsibility. Harnessing the potential of institutions, however, can necessitate making some fundamental changes to their processes or shared beliefs. Importantly, it is the professionals working within institutions, such as health workers, who are often the gatekeepers to change at the individual level.

Maternal, newborn, and child health systems in particular often neglect the role of active, caring fathers. The drive to change this is being pushed forward by organizations around the world that are equipping health providers with the attitudes, skills, and knowledge they need to engage with men at this pivotal moment in parents' lives. Taking the stage at the MenCare Global Meeting 2017, Francisco Aguayo from EME/Fundación [CulturaSalud](#) shared insights from Chile that he has also applied to projects elsewhere in Latin America.¹¹

6.2 Engaging fathers through the health sector in Chile

Thanks to the [Chile Crece Contigo](#) ("Chile Grows With You") initiative, child health and development has seen considerable investment in Chile in recent years. This has led to a new focus on the importance of positive parenting, and, as one of the leading organizations in the field, CulturaSalud provided technical support to the Chilean government for a nationwide active parenting program and strengthened the program's focus on men's roles in caregiving.

Due to Chile Crece Contigo's work, fathers are more engaged in maternal, newborn, and child health, attending pre-natal visits and being present at birth. Yet, to make real and sustainable change, the gendered attitudes of health providers matter. In Chile, CulturaSalud explored the attitudes of health professionals using the Gender-Equitable Men (GEM) Scale. The organization found that when health workers' attitudes are inequitable, they tend to focus on mothers and leave fathers at the periphery of discussions about maternal, newborn, and child health.

The gender biases in health professionals' interactions with parents reinforce gender norms at a critical time in a couple's life that represents an opportunity for change. CulturaSalud aims to equip health workers and the institutions to which they belong with the knowledge

"Fatherhood is a door to working on violence prevention."

- Francisco Aguayo, Director of EME/Fundación CulturaSalud

and insights they need to foster more equitable family relationships. This kind of institutional change takes time and requires a combination of top-level advocacy and bottom-up approaches. Yet the impact of reaching men at a time when they become fathers can have transformative ripple effects in the way fathers see their role and, in turn, how their families see them.

¹¹ Watch Francisco Aguayo address the MenCare Global Meeting 2017 at bit.ly/MenCare-FAguayo

7. COMMUNICATIONS FOR CHANGE

7.1 Key points from the MenCare Global Meeting 2017

Insights

Violence against women and children cannot be solved by laws alone – harmful attitudes and practices also need to be addressed

Challenges

Promoting behavior change among people with firmly held beliefs can be difficult in any context

Achievements

Communications are credited with helping make the discussion around men, fatherhood, caregiving, and gender equality a mainstream public issue in Ethiopia

Recommendations

It is important to understand the target audience, consulting with them throughout a campaign to ensure it is well informed and has a positive impact

Creative approaches that use multiple kinds of media and communication can be very effective

Communicating positive alternatives to stereotypical masculinities is a challenge for almost all organizations in this field. Compared to other activist work, it can seem especially difficult, as the target audience is often stubbornly resistant to talking about the issues that campaigns aim to address. Reaching that audience to promote men's engagement in caregiving in an appealing way was one of the topics explored at the MenCare Global Meeting 2017. While there is no one-size-fits-all approach to communications, the participants at the meeting saw how harmful stereotypes and gender norms are being challenged through imaginative campaigns that build upon media partnerships, school participation, celebrity role models, and corporate buy-in.

Sharing an example of the success of an ongoing campaign, Getalaam Kassa from [Hiwot Ethiopia](#) took to the stage at the MenCare Global Meeting 2017 to show how his organization uses the power of radio to address violence against women and children by modeling positive, caring alternatives to harmful forms of masculinity.

“When we started this program, different institutions in Ethiopia were opposing us. Now they are part of the program.”

– *Getalaam Kassa,*
Executive Director at
Hiwot Ethiopia



7.2 Broadcasting new perspectives in Ethiopia

Hiwot Ethiopia, which was established in 1995 to combat the devastating effects of HIV in Ethiopia, has become well known for its pioneering work with boys and men to tackle child sexual abuse, exploitation, and gender-based violence. The organization aims to do this in a context in which, according to one study, more than three-quarters of women face inter-partner violence in their lifetime. Other research found that almost half of children aged 11 to 17 had experienced physical punishment in a 12-month period, demonstrating how the laws to prohibit violence against children are often disregarded, and poorly enforced.¹²

Because the problem cannot be solved solely by writing solutions into law, Hiwot Ethiopia drew on the powerful influence of mass media to help shape public opinion at the individual and community levels. With the help of partners, the organization developed the Yenegta Weg Radio Show as an interactive and open public conversation that airs three times per week on two well-known stations. The program, which includes dramatizations, interviews, and phone-ins, aims to increase public recognition of the positive role men and boys can play in family and social life. In addition to the show, a short public message airs regularly through the week.

In any communications campaign, it is important to know the audience. By setting up listener groups to discuss the show's messages, Hiwot Ethiopia was able to strengthen the show's effectiveness. This, alongside a concerted effort to promote the show in newspapers, with printed materials, on social media, and through school partnerships, has helped the show bring the topic of gender-based violence and positive, caring masculinities into the public discourse since 2008.

The project has been credited with helping mainstream the importance of men and boys in engaging with gender-based issues, and many personal testimonies speak to the positive changes the show has brought to individual families across the country. Hiwot Ethiopia continues to consult with media professionals, listener groups, parents, schools, and community-based organizations to evaluate and improve the radio show.

¹² Watch Getalaam Kassa address the MenCare Global Meeting 2017 at bit.ly/MenCare-GKassa

8. WORKING WITH RELIGIOUS LEADERS TO ENGAGE FATHERS

8.1 Key points from the MenCare Global Meeting 2017

Insights

Faith-based organizations often have strong links to communities, and a strong voice on the ways people should live their lives

Faith leaders often provide informal support services like counseling

Challenges

Some faith institutions have their own traditionally held stereotypes that are not easy to challenge

Achievements

A program in Vietnam has developed innovative partnerships with churches to reach new parents in the community and foster equitable, caring behaviors, while transforming problematic practices in some communities

Recommendations

Working with faith leaders can be an effective means to reach local communities in a way that resonates with them

Messages that draw on religious texts can complement messages of mutual respect and equality

A significant proportion of development work in the 20th century and to the present day has been driven by secular institutions. Yet, for thousands of years, religious organizations have been at the heart of communities. While faith leaders provide both religious and community guidance, they have often been overlooked as a key stakeholder in work on social change in traditional international development spaces – partly because they are often associated with promoting patriarchal and gender-inequitable values. With countless faiths providing the moral and spiritual grounding for billions of people around the world, failing to engage

constructively with them could be a significant blind-spot in work on gender equality, including transforming the ways men engage with care work.

8.2 Faith in innovation, innovation in faith in Vietnam

Vietnam has seen significant gains for women in recent decades. While women are still underrepresented in professional and public life, once-immovable norms are shifting. Gender stereotypes, however, continue to see women bearing the majority of the house work and childcare, and 58 percent of women still experience domestic violence during their lifetime.¹³

Recognizing the influence of religious voices in certain Vietnamese communities, the [Center for Studies and Applied Sciences in Gender](#) (CSAGA) has worked to engage with Christian leaders to reach men and women on gender-related issues. Nguyen Van Anh, director and founder of CSAGA, shared her experience at the MenCare Global Meeting 2017.

The churches CSAGA works with have their own pre-marital courses for couples, as well as so-called “patriarch” groups for men. To address stereotypes and tackle harmful attitudes among men, CSAGA met with pastors of a local church and offered to give free domestic-violence prevention training workshops for the pre-marital groups.

The course explores issues of gender, domestic violence, and ways in which people can seek support. It also creates an invaluable dialogue on the roles of men and women, opening spaces to question perceived attitudes and norms and reflect on where they come from. For instance, before attending the course, a group of young nuns involved in the workshops saw men as the naturally ordained heads of household; however, the course created a space to reflect upon and challenge this belief in a respectful way.

While attitudes such as this are strongly held by both men and women, the workshops open up a dialogue in groups that have not critically engaged with the idea of gender before. The participants, Van Anh explained, are then able to explore questions such as the respective influence of faith, and the divine versus social and political factors in men’s and women’s relative social positions. The pastors conclude the workshops by discussing the fact that there are no Christian texts that explicitly state men are entitled to more privileges than women. Finally, CSAGA draws on highly respected quotes by Pope Francis that suggest equality and mutual respect and provides these printed resources for pastors to draw upon in their own leadership positions.

The key to successful faith-based approaches is ensuring a careful understanding of religious communities and the spirit of the particular faith in order to have productive and successful conversations.

¹³ United Nations Viet Nam (2010). *Keeping Silent is Dying - Results from the National Study on Domestic Violence against Women in Viet Nam*.

9. WORKING WITH MEN FOR GENDER TRANSFORMATION

9.1 Key points from the MenCare Global Meeting 2017

Insights

Working with men and boys is now widely recognized as an integral part of gender-equality work

Work with men and boys should strive to be gender-transformative, critically engaging with and aiming to shift the underlying harmful norms and attitudes men and women have

Challenges

Programs that do not take a gender-transformative approach risk reinforcing the inequalities they aim to address

Achievements

Against a difficult political landscape, a program in Russia is making clear gains in the field of men's caregiving through gender-transformative fathers' workshops

New research in Rwanda shows that parenting programs are an effective route toward tackling domestic violence

Recommendations

Encouraging self-reflection, dialogue, and interaction is key to a gender-transformative approach

Men becoming fathers is a good entry point to starting these discussions with men

Programs should account for diversity among men

Within gender-equality work, the topic of fatherhood has slowly but dramatically shifted in recent years. Once a periphery target (or “gatekeeper”) group in projects aimed at empowering women and/or protecting children, men – and fathers in particular – are now recognized as one of the key pieces of the puzzle in challenging harmful masculinities and unequal dynamics of power at the household level. Importantly, research shows that men’s nonviolent and equitable caregiving is good not only for women and children, but also for men themselves. But, what is the best way to engage with men and boys around issues relating to caregiving?

Before developing interventions that address men’s roles in families, it is important to understand different approaches to promoting gender equality and how they can achieve expected outcomes. The MenCare Global Meeting 2017 brought together experts from all over the world to discuss this topic, with a key message from Promundo being that real, sustainable change is only possible with a gender-transformative approach, which is explored below. Interventions that fall short of this can risk validating, reinforcing, and perpetuating the very inequalities they aim to address.

9.2 What is a gender-transformative approach?

Simply put, a gender-transformative approach aims to change existing gender norms rather than simply working around them.¹⁴ It can be best understood in the context of different approaches on a spectrum:

A **gender-blind** approach ignores how society, politics, and the economy impact men and women differently. By ignoring the power dynamics between and among men and women, boys and girls, interventions allow inequities to persist, or even result in harmful consequences that undermine a program’s intended objective.

A **gender-aware** approach looks at the differences between groups and might address them with interventions that, for instance, aim to empower women in relation to men.

A **gender-transformative** approach fosters a critical examination of gender norms and power dynamics with the aim of changing inequitable norms and systems. On an individual level, it can mean helping people become aware of, question, and redefine the roles and behaviors that a given community considers appropriate for men and women.

¹⁴ More detailed definitions and training resources are available from the Interagency Gender Working Group at igwg.org/training

9.3 Disrupting the cycle of violence in Russia

In Russia, 14,000 women are killed by their husbands or other family members every year, and many more suffer from domestic violence.¹⁵ Like elsewhere in the world, this has traditionally been seen as a women's problem. However, Russia's conservative politics does little to combat the issue and is making it ever-easier for perpetrators to act with impunity.

Despite the stark reality, there is some support for victims and survivors of abuse thanks to organizations like [ANNA Centre](#). At the MenCare Global Meeting 2017, Maria Pisklakova¹⁶ and Sergey Zakharov from ANNA explained how the organization has been operating a helpline for anyone experiencing abuse. Recognizing that violence against women and domestic violence are symptoms of a deeper problem, ANNA Centre has developed a strong focus on men alongside its work supporting victims and survivors. Among men, fathers are an important group to target for their roles in the lives of children. Fatherhood is also a useful entry point to engage with men and address the root causes of domestic violence.

To better understand the foundations of abusive behaviors in Russia, ANNA Centre explored gender norms in different communities using both quantitative research and focus group discussions, which included views from expectant fathers, social workers, activists, and psychologists.

Because abusive behaviors happen at the level of individuals, it is through dialogue and discussions that ANNA Centre hopes to effect change. That is why the organization advocated for "Papa Schools" to be offered at maternal clinics and family support centers run by both the state and NGOs around the country. Thanks in part to ANNA's advocacy work, fathers' programs are now up and running in various locations across the country. These sessions aim to open up conversations about men's and women's roles, and the ways social pressures shape individual behaviors and beliefs. This approach, valuing self-reflection, dialogue, and interaction, is at the heart of gender-transformative work. Instead of creating interventions that address the symptoms of abuse, these conversations help address the underlying cause.

Because of the diversity among men, ANNA has a multi-program approach that includes, for instance, low-motivation and high-motivation groups, allowing the workshop facilitators to tailor sessions accordingly. While there are still huge challenges, including strong resistance from conservative groups, "Papa Schools" represent a small but radical site for change.

¹⁵ ANNA National Centre for the Prevention of Violence (2010). *Violence Against Women in the Russian Federation*.

¹⁶ Watch Marina Parker address the MenCare Global Meeting 2017 (speaking in Russian) at bit.ly/MenCare-MParker

9.4 Does working with fathers work? Building the evidence

Practitioners working with fathers can see the direct impact of their work on individuals. But, how can one be sure the approach is effective across a group of men, or effective long term? Developing interventions based on evidence is crucial to organizations on the ground. A strong evidence base also gives donors, governments, and other stakeholders compelling reasons to invest in work with fathers. Ruti Levtov and Kate Doyle from Promundo-US presented on how a randomized control trial (RCT) in Rwanda showed the positive results of a parenting program called Bandedereho (meaning “role model” in Kinyarwanda), developed by the [Rwanda Men’s Resource Center](#) (RWAMREC) in partnership with Promundo, as part of [MenCare+](#).¹⁷

“One of the things that we get asked a lot is, ‘Okay, you’re doing these programs, you’re investing a lot of resources in these programs, but do they work?’”

- Ruti Levtov, Promundo-US

The study compared couples who took part in a 15-week parenting course with couples who did not, collecting survey data at several times during and after the program. Participants reported on everything from the distribution of household and care work to how emotionally supported they felt in a relationship. One aim of the study was to compare levels of violence in couples who participated in the course with couples who did not, with the program taking place in a region with one of the country’s highest rates of intimate partner violence.

The study showed clear and compelling evidence of significantly lower rates of violence, greater sharing of housework, and women’s stronger feelings of emotional support among participants in the parenting course. However, there were other important insights. For example, while the amount of time men spent on unpaid care work was greater among those who participated in the course, the study did not find a difference in women’s amount of time spent on care work between participants and non-participants, indicating an area where more research and understanding is needed.

Because the study collected data almost two years after the parenting groups were implemented, it showed long-term differences across a host of behaviors related to violence, reproductive and maternal health outcomes, and gender equality. It also created a wealth of data showing how carefully planned and implemented interventions and evaluations can build strong evidence for a need for further work, as well as reveal new issues to be addressed.

¹⁷ Watch Ruti Levtov and Kate Doyle from Promundo address the MenCare Global Meeting 2017 at bit.ly/MenCare-Promundo

10. A WORLD OF IDEAS AND GOOD PRACTICE

The MenCare Global Meeting 2017 brought together leading experts from around the world. This presented a unique opportunity to pool knowledge from a diverse wealth of international projects with the vision of full equality in both unpaid care work and paid employment. The approaches they have taken and challenges they met along the way – many of which are shared in this section – provide valuable insights for all who work in this field.

GETTING FATHERS INVOLVED

Good practice

Getting a group of men into a room to talk about gender can be a huge challenge. Organizations around the world have come up with a range of innovative and creative ways to do it. At the MenCare Global Meeting 2017, MÄN Sweden shared their approach of targeting new fathers through midwives. Another project by Foundation Fathers in Latvia found that men are more likely to engage with activities like fathers' hikes, rather than a traditional workshop format. Projects that incorporate fun or playful activities reported better levels of retention and engagement of participants. However, programs should also have patience and recognize that a slow start does not mean it is a bad concept.

Challenges & solutions

Resistance from some men is a challenge for most organizations in this field. It can be managed in different ways depending on the context, target group, and aims of the program. Some organizations, such as ANNA Centre, tailor different sessions for different target groups depending on, for instance, their motivation levels, experiences of fatherhood, or issues such as a history of aggression. Regardless of the target group, practitioners find that it is important to create a safe, non-judgmental space, recognizing that no one is perfect.

BEING TRANSFORMATIVE, NOT HETERONORMATIVE

Good practice

While working with men is becoming more mainstream, there is a risk of reinforcing rather than challenging heteronormative norms. Projects should take care to think about transformative approaches that account for diversity in gender identities and sexual orientations.

Challenges & solutions

A recurring risk is that political or business leaders use the language of equality and even promote equitable policies, but their talk does not turn to action, or is used to mask systems of inequality. Activists and practitioners at the MenCare meeting discussed how it is vital to hold these leaders accountable.

RESHAPING AND RESPECTING THE FAMILY SPACE

Good practice

Many of the professionals and experts at the MenCare Global Meeting 2017 are working to transform power dynamics in the private sphere of the home. While traditional family roles and the weight of social expectations are often a key barrier to change, they are important points for transformative discussions with men and women. Organizations in the field tend to open up these discussions at the pivotal time in many people's lives when they become parents.

Challenges & solutions

For some women, the home is one of the only spaces in which they have some power. Programs that encourage men to take on their equal share of care and household duties risk undermining women's autonomy, whether it is managing the household, taking responsibility for household finances, or being a dependable care person. Nikki van de Gaag from Oxfam and others at the MenCare meeting emphasized the importance of not undermining what power women do currently hold in households. For instance, programs should ensure that projects creating equality in unpaid care work are matched by those promoting equality in paid work.

DRAWING ON THE EVIDENCE

Good practice

Resources like the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) and the 2017 *State of the World's Fathers* report show the clear need for action. These resources provide vital evidence in project proposals and program design.

Challenges & solutions

The growing body of global and local research is a key to unlocking funding for projects working to change care work. However, a lack of funding is a near-universal constraint for organizations in the field of gender equality. Work with men and boys, in particular, needs to make a compelling case that does not compete with women's rights organizations for funding.

ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE

Good practice

The benefits of working with young people on topics related to gender and men's roles in care work are clear. The emphasis for some experienced practitioners at the MenCare meeting is not simply targeting young people, but also engaging them as leaders and active participants in the development and implementation of projects.

Challenges & solutions

Complex social dynamics of adolescent groups can make for difficult terrain for many gender-equality organizations. A successful approach developed by Smart Kolektiv in Serbia and the Young Men Initiative (YMI) in the Balkans, supported by CARE International, is creating peer-led clubs in schools. Incentives like meeting celebrity role models taking part in a campaign keeps young people engaged.

WORKING WITH HEALTH INSTITUTIONS

Good practice

Institutions often perpetuate harmful social norms about men and caregiving. The health sector in particular is a crucial entry point for challenging reinforced stereotypes. Involving healthcare and social work professionals in programs is an important route towards sustainable change. Program P, developed by Promundo, Puntos de Encuentro, CulturaSalud and MenEngage Alliance in Latin America, gives a strategy and toolkit to engage men in active fatherhood from prenatal care through delivery, childbirth, and their children's early years.

Challenges & solutions

Because gender equality is not always a top priority for the healthcare sector, framing fatherhood in terms of health and wellbeing can be more effective when talking to the gatekeepers of institutions.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Good practice

Programs working with men and boys should challenge the underlying mechanisms that legitimize male power. This means they must also be inherently complementary to programs that work to empower women and girls. At the MenCare meeting, organizations working with men and boys discussed the importance of being accountable – not only to women's empowerment organizations, but also to the LGBTQI community and other rights-based movements.

Challenges & solutions

Working in a diverse world means being accountable to all organizations that stand up for marginalized groups. Taking a truly intersectional approach that recognizes multiple, layered, and diverse experiences of discrimination is a vital aspect of creating transformative change.

ALLIES AND PARTNERS

Good practice

Some participants at the MenCare Global Meeting 2017, such as Sonke Gender Justice, explained how policy wins like improved parental leave would not have been possible without close partnerships with women's rights organizations. Working as allies to other rights-based movements is essential to achieving shared goals and ensuring work with men and boys supports broader equality goals.

Challenges & solutions

Uncertainty remains among women's rights activists about whether work with men and fathers supports broader political movements to challenge patriarchy. Work with fathers must be clearly and explicitly in line with human-rights-based approaches that support both women's and children's rights.

CHANGING BUSINESS CULTURE

Good practice

Men's involvement in care work can depend largely on their work cultures. In many regions, the private sector still lags behind when it comes to uptake of parental leave by fathers. From Puntos de Encuentro in Nicaragua to AÇEV in Turkey, MenCare partners are working with private institutions to promote a supportive environment for men to take on their care responsibilities.

Challenges & solutions

While businesses might be slow to embrace family-friendly policies, economic arguments can help spur change. For example, flexible working arrangements have been linked to increased employee productivity, staff retention, and attracting the best talent. At the MenCare Meeting, the Dutch organization Rutgers discussed the value of developing a business case to support equitable policies in the workplace.

MULTI-LEVEL APPROACH

Good practice

Policy change does not always lead to behavioral change. Action is also needed to create the environment for policies to work. At the MenCare Meeting, Douglas Mendoza Urrutia from Puntos de Encuentro in Nicaragua discussed the importance of working across multiple levels simultaneously. Real progress is difficult if a project only focuses on one area.

Challenges & solutions

Working at multiple levels simultaneously requires time, resources, and careful planning. Whatever the main focus of a program, resources from MenCare and its partners can help tackle the issue at other levels, from advocacy work to fathers' groups.

11. FUTURE PLANS

11.1 Recommendations from participants at the MenCare Global Meeting 2017

The MenCare Global Meeting 2017 culminated in a collaborative plenary session on how the future of the MenCare campaign can build on some of its achievements so far. Participants called for MenCare and its partners to:

KEEP WORKING TOGETHER

Progress is only possible thanks to the dedication of people and organizations around the world working in their specific contexts and projects. Yet the MenCare Global Meeting 2017 showed that none of the partners work alone, and that there is a large appetite to collaborate even more closely, for example by sharing information and resources, developing more joint media campaigns, and securing joint funding.

STAY FOCUSED ON THE ISSUE OF UNPAID CARE

Diverse organizations working on a range of projects should remain grounded in the issue that the fair and equal distribution of unpaid care work is a fundamental requirement for gender equality.

USE THE EVIDENCE

Several of the meeting's participants emphasized the need to make use of the newly launched 2017 *State of The World's Fathers: Time for Action* report (building on its 2015 predecessor) – in both program development and advocacy work.

WORK EVEN MORE WITH INSTITUTIONS

Inspired by some of the success stories of initiatives like Program P, some MenCare partners felt they could develop their own pioneering work with health and education institutions.

BE INCLUSIVE

There was a recognition at the MenCare meeting of the need to ensure projects meet needs of specific groups such as migrants, youth, and LGBTQI people.



11.2 What is next for MenCare?

As a global campaign, MenCare aims to support its partners in their work around the world and provide a leading voice through:

ENHANCING ADVOCACY

MenCare's research, including the publication of the biennial *State of the World's Fathers* report, will continue to shape advocacy work at the highest levels. By working closely with key stakeholders such as UN agencies, civil society organizations, businesses, and governments, MenCare aims to establish an international goal of men doing half of the unpaid care work and provide tools for partners to continue this advocacy in their own regions.

SUPPORT INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF A GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACH

MenCare will develop and test multiple models for institutionalizing gender-transformative approaches targeting education, health, and social services. Bringing successful approaches to scale, such as through professional training programs, online courses, and cascade training models is another key priority.

FURTHER DEVELOP EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRAMS

Tools to test and evaluate interventions will be further developed and supported by MenCare so they can help partners around the world implement effective, evidence-based programs.

STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS

Strengthening the collective knowledge of MenCare partners benefits all who work to promote equal care and gender justice. The MenCare Global Meeting 2017, the campaign's second global partner meeting, was an invaluable moment to share experiences and expertise, which this report aims to help capture. MenCare will continue to bring the field together and help strengthen communications, knowledge-sharing, and partnerships for many years to come.

12. RESOURCES

Video recordings of the MenCare Global Meeting 2017 are available at the MenCare YouTube channel

[youtube.com/MenCareCampaign](https://www.youtube.com/MenCareCampaign)

International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES)

promundoglobal.org/images

International Platform for Equal, Non-Transferable, and Fully Paid Parental Leave (PLENT)

equalandnontransferable.org

OECD Gender Portal

oecd.org/gender

Oxfam's Rapid Care Assessment

policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk

State of the World's Fathers

sowf.men-care.org

MenEngage Alliance

menengage.org



Photo by Irina Istomina
Exhibited at the
Fatherhood Photo Exhibition,
MenCare Global Meeting 2017

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www.men-care.org



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[/MenCareCampaign](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCMenCareCampaign)

MenCare is coordinated by Promundo and Sonke Gender Justice in collaboration with steering committee members Save the Children Sweden, Oxfam GB, and MenEngage Alliance.

