



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

147th IPU Assembly

Luanda, Angola
23–27 October 2023



Parity debate

I care to care: Male parliamentarians engage in equal caring responsibilities

Wednesday, 25 October 2023, 09:00–10:30
Sala Nobre, ground floor

The overall aim of a parity debate is to promote dialogue between women and men at the IPU and to encourage them to debate issues of common interest together. In line with the principle of a parity debate, the composition of the debating panel will be gender balanced. The order of speakers invited to intervene from the floor will also follow a gender-balanced sequence. Having an equal number of men and women speak in the debate will allow the different and complementary views and experiences of both genders to emerge. Delegations are therefore invited to be represented in this debate by male and female participants.

Concept note

A year ago, the IPU Member Parliaments adopted the **Kigali Declaration** [Gender equality and gender-sensitive parliaments as drivers of change for a more resilient and peaceful world](#), a milestone in progress towards gender equality and gender-sensitive parliaments.

One of the major challenges that this Declaration encourages parliaments and parliamentarians to address is equality in caring responsibilities among men and women. In the Declaration parliamentarians committed to ***“set an example in our societies by undertaking 50% of the daily care work for our families, regardless of whether we are male or female MPs”***.

This commitment is groundbreaking and can bring about a radical change. Owing to gendered social norms that view unpaid care work as a female prerogative, women around the world currently spend four times as much time as men in unpaid care.¹ Also, how society, policy makers and institutions address issues concerning caring responsibilities has important implications for the achievement of gender equality: they can either expand the capabilities and choices of women and men, or confine women to traditional roles associated with care and motherhood, and men to traditional roles associated with masculinity.

The *State of the World's Fathers 2023* report² found, however, that mothers and fathers overwhelmingly defined care in positive terms, using words such as love, help, protection, attention and responsibility to define care. The report also found that men who responded to the 17-country survey reported being more involved in care than before.

Additionally, more than half of both mothers and fathers said that political activism for care leave policies was important to them. This ranged from 57% for fathers and 66% for mothers in India, to 92% for fathers and 94% of mothers in Rwanda. Without policy change to support equality in care, individual change will not be enough.

¹ The average time devoted to unpaid care work for women at the global level is 277 minutes (4 hours and 37 minutes or 19.7% of a 24-hour day). For men, the world average is 111 minutes (1 hour and 51 minutes or 7.7% of a 24-hour day) (International Labour Organization, 2019).

² www.equimundo.org/resources/state-of-the-worlds-fathers-2023

A significant proportion of both women and men in all countries said they had taken some form of action to improve care policies. The highest percentage (74%) of both women and men had talked to friends and family about the issue, followed by 39% of women and 36% of men who said they had signed or shared a petition online, and 27% of women and 33% of men who had attended an in-person event to support the cause. Finally, 20% of women and 25% of men said they had approached or talked to local leaders.

This suggests that there is an untapped opportunity to engage men alongside women in demanding the care policies all households need.

By embodying the change, parliamentarians can serve as role models and lead the way. Male parliamentarians who fully embrace their role as fathers and caregivers are particularly important. Although they are still rare, they offer a healthy alternative to the old and disconnected image of the cold and distant politician. More importantly, such male role models of caregivers contribute to the valuation, by other men and society as a whole, of caring responsibilities and unpaid care work that are so necessary for the well-being of children, for the well-being of men themselves as well as for healthy, gender-equal, just and non-violent societies.³

In addition, MPs can advocate and engage in the implementation of policies to achieve the equal distribution of care work and to encourage men's full investment in these fields. Such policies can cover, among others, parental leave for all parents, childcare facilities for all working parents, the redistribution of paid and unpaid care work between men and women, the promotion of a father's involvement in the prenatal period through to birth and childhood, the campaigning for the involvement of boys and young men in care work.

Men and women MPs cannot act alone; they need parliaments as institutions to help lead the way towards the transformative framework required for equal care. That is why, among the 10 actions of the Kigali Declaration, the IPU Member Parliaments have committed themselves to implement over the next 10 years, to ***“[b]ecome caring parliaments by providing fully for the caring needs of men and women MPs and staff as they carry out their parliamentary duties”***.

This parity debate will focus on implementing these two strong commitments of the Kigali Declaration. It will provide the opportunity to:

- Understand caring responsibilities.
- Explore policies and initiatives on equal care.
- Craft key messages and an action plan to advocate for equal care.

Format

The format will facilitate learning on equal care, sharing of advice and techniques in advocacy, and interacting on good practices in policymaking. The parity debate will be informed by expert inputs on equal care and will include practical exercises on advocacy.

Agenda

Opening remarks

Part. 1: Equality in caring responsibilities in practice: Interactive exercise

Part. 2: Policies and parliamentary initiatives on equal care: Presentation and sharing of good practices

Part 3: Advocating for equal care: Techniques, tips and action plans.

³ Equipundo, Equity of Care, www.equipundo.org/our-work-equity-of-care.

Equipundo: Centre for Masculinities will support the session in collaboration with the IPU. Equipundo co-coordinates the MenCare Global Fatherhood Campaign and produces the biannual State of the World's Fathers report. The MenCare 50/50 Commitment platform is a policy commitment platform that centers the key policies that would foster men's engagement in care equality.