

**Launch of 'The State of the World's Fathers'  
Report  
House of Commons  
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I have an old friend who was going through the family photo album

She noticed there were ONLY photos of her **husband**:

- **Changing babies nappies**
- **Of her husband** cooking the **BBQ** on a rare summer evening
- **Of her husband** reading the children an occasional bedtime story
- **Of her husband** hoovering and tidying up the toy strewn **Living room**

You get the picture and my drift – she realised that these photos captured the occasional one-off moments of role reversal *that*

*dreams are made of..... and to make matters worse it was she who had been behind the camera making that story!!*

There were practically NO photos of her at all in the family album except a rather blurred one of her saying “**I do**” at the altar.....

WHAT VISUAL STORY FOR POSTERITY WAS SHE IMPRINTING ON HER CHILDREN’S MEMORIES SHE WONDERED THRO’ THESE PHOTOS AND HER OWN ROLE IN THEIR LIVES?

WHAT **HIDDEN NARRATIVE** LAY BEHIND THE OFFICIAL ONE OF THE PHOTO ALBUM?

So then I was reflecting on today and this report in the context of that story.

Of course it goes without saying that we should all roundly welcome anything that upholds the rights of **children** to have loving caring present fathers.....

And let's *also* remember the gap between the headlines and the hype and the story that hasn't been told today – and that rarely gets told.

**Two recent key reports** sprang to mind as I read this report:

\*2012 American Political Science Review: great study by Htun and Weldon 70 countries over 40 years – the **one** thing that had

reduced VAW and had changed the status quo was a **strong autonomous feminist movement**.

In their abstract they said: *"feminist mobilization in civil society — not intra-legislative political phenomena such as leftist parties or women in government or economic factors like national wealth—accounts for variation in policy development. In addition, we demonstrate that autonomous movements produce an **enduring** impact on VAW policy through the institutionalization of feminist ideas in international norms. "*

\*And another report last month from AWID sprang to mind that shows that funding for women's rights organisations globally lags shamefully behind that of other organisations.

\* In 2010 alone, on average, 740 women's rights organisations globally received \$20,000 each. In total they received \$106 million.

By contrast Save the Children received \$1.442 billion dollars (x13) and World Vision \$2.611 billion (x24).

**Go figure, as they say in the US.**

Now let's get back to some grassroots basics. Over the 20 years since a programme I developed called Stepping Stones has been used in many communities around the world, the four things I have heard most consistently that make a difference in women's lives and reduce **GBV** are when there starts to be:

- joint decision-making in the household over task sharing
- joint decision-making in the household over how to spend a couple's income and
- joint decision-making in the household over if to have sex, when to have sex and *how* to have sex – ie with a condom or not.
- Sitting together and jointly dreaming and planning for their future together and their children's future

What women want is decision-making power in relation to work, money and sex and their future dreams.

And these are the 4 ingredients for her happiness, her health and her safety: and for her well-being – for both herself and her children.

And let's not get away from it, no matter how much men help around the house and have paternity leave, I don't think anyone is suggesting here that women *stop* being their children's primary carers. **Sue Gerhardt and many others have explained how critical it is for a happy child to have a happy mother.**

And this, I think is the elephant in the room in this report, which I would like us all to welcome in – the role of the **woman** who is the

key **third** part of this triadic relationship between the man as father, the child as off-spring and the WOMAN as mother.

So reflecting today on *this* report, the Htun and Weldon study *and* the AWID report and *also* on what I've learnt from *women* around the world over the years:

Let's remember the *gap* between the headlines and hype on the *one* hand and what *we* have all known for years:

- the centuries of the *unfunded* women's rights movement to bring us a sustained change that truly satisfies us *all* and involves *all* women in that *joint* decision-making
- the centuries of women *not* having access to the corridors of power where UN heads and celebrity speakers reside



- the centuries of women not having *our* voices heard or our *own* research heeded or funded by those who have the power to change the status quo.

There's an awful lot of us women who spend quite a lot of the time with pounding headaches, very tired of banging our heads against low glass ceilings, trying to forage for scraps.

So my midsummer's dream for this father's day, this Sunday is that you men behind this report might one day soon bring women into the picture album too.

Moving ahead without keeping **US** in the frame is *not* shared decision-making and will lead to problems and much worse, as Shakespeare well knew and as he had Titania explain to Oberon:

*“ The nine-men’s-morris is filled up with mud,..... No night is now with hymn or carol blessed. And this same progeny of evils comes From our debate, from our dissension. We are their parents and original.”*

In conclusion then we women’s *rights* organisations:

- \* need *you* to share your *funding* successes with us,
- \* need *you* to share your access to *people* in high *places* with us
- \* need *you* to share with us in all our *joint* decision-making
- \* and we need *you* to share our mundane tasks with us

to advance *women’s rights*:

- \*for our *own* sakes;
- \*for the sake of our *children*
- and for the sake of us *all*.

Just imagine what, with joint decision-making we could all achieve together. You know you won't get there without us.