

# Breaking Gender Stereotypes: How Promundo is working to shift harmful gender norms globally

Practitioners and Advocates Featured:

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Founded in 1997 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Promundo is an international leader in promoting gender justice and anti-violence through research, programs, and advocacy. The organization engages men and boys in partnership with all genders to transform harmful gender norms and unequal power dynamics as part of their goal of achieving gender equality. With programming and partners in over 45 countries, from Brazil, to the United States, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Portugal and more, Promundo has a global impact, reaching nearly 10 million individuals to date. For more information on Promundo's history and mission, visit [here](#). This profile provides a snapshot of Promundo's various gender-transformative programs and focuses on their work with men and boys.

## REIMAGINING GENDER NORMS THROUGH THOUGHTFUL, CRITICAL DISCUSSION

Social norms are rules or guidelines shared by a group of people that reflect, shape, and reinforce values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. Brian Heilman, a senior research officer at Promundo says, "Social norms are social by definition. They are created in social environments." With this understanding, Promundo facilitates dialogues on norms about masculinity and femininity, the inequitable distribution of power and control among genders, and how these factors contribute to gender-based violence. Understanding the differing experiences of individuals with varying identities, Promundo focuses on creating safe spaces for reflection and dialogue as a means for achieving social norms change.

Working with communities, Promundo encourages individuals to question, challenge, and ultimately reimagine and change narrow and harmful gender stereotypes. This work is sometimes called gender-transformative programming. It calls on participants to challenge social norms and to shift the status quo. This approach may even apply to the program design itself. For example, it is easy to say, "Oh boys like sports, so let's create programming for boys that is centered around sports," or, "Girls like fashion, so let's focus on fashion," but it's important to reflect on these assumptions and work to change the often default approach.

## **WORKING ACROSS THE SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL MODEL TO ADDRESS SOCIAL NORMS**

Social norms are created and sustained by many different players, for example, the media at the societal level, as well as by schools or workplaces at the community level or peer groups at the relationship level. Promundo works across multiple levels of the "[social-ecological model](#)" and meets the needs of different age groups and genders as well. For example, at the individual and relationship level, discussion groups help participants to build their own understanding of gender norms, to exchange experiences, and to learn together through discussion, while at the community level, Promundo's

programming empowers participants to share their stories and experiences, sometimes through campaigns. Promundo also works to "take on the patriarchy" and address structural issues and barriers to equality. The organization has been able to promote progressive legislation and policies such as more generous paid family leave for all genders.



*Young men participate in group activities through Program H, an initiative that encourages them to process the social construction of gender norms. Photo provided by Promundo.*

## **SUPPORTING POSITIVE MASCULINITY**

Promundo's Program H ('H' for hombre) is a foundational program that centers on critical discussions about gender norms with men and encourages the transformation of harmful gender roles. Program H began in Brazil and has been adapted and implemented in more than 34 countries on five continents and translated into over 10 languages. For more information on Program H, and to download the free curriculum, [visit here](#).

While US programming is often adapted and used in other countries, Promundo has brought learnings from the implementation of Program H in other countries to the US. With funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, they revamped the program under a new name, Manhood 2.0, and are implementing and evaluating it in Pittsburgh and Washington, DC. For more information on Manhood 2.0, and to download the free curriculum, [visit here](#).

## **USING FATHERHOOD AS A STARTING POINT TO ADVANCE GENDER EQUALITY**

Promundo also focuses on fatherhood and men's caregiving as an entry point to disrupt harmful gender norms, and the unequal distribution of unpaid care work. Through an effort called Program P (Padre), Promundo and partners engage fathers and their partners through a series of hands-on activities to discuss decision-making, family planning, and more. For more information on Program P, and to download the free curriculum, [visit here](#).

In addition to Program P, Promundo's biennial report, [State of the World's Fathers](#) serves as a call to action to reach equality in unpaid care work as part of the global, gender equality agenda. The report, an advocacy publication of MenCare: A Global Fatherhood Campaign, showcases the state of men's caregiving. It also highlights recommendations for policy change and action to accelerate progress toward more equitable time use between men and women when it comes to unpaid care work.



*Men in Rwanda participate in group education as part of Program P.  
Photo provided by Promundo.*

Brian Heilman is a senior research officer at Promundo, where his work focuses on eliminating harmful masculine norms, preventing all forms of gender-based violence, and achieving broader gender equality and social justice in the United States and around the world. Brian has extensive program and research experience in South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and the Middle East, and works as a sexual violence prevention educator in Minnesota.

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## RESOURCES

- [Promundo Report: The Man Box: A Study on Being A Young Man in the US, UK, and Mexico](#)
- [Promundo report: Masculine Norms and Violence Making the Connections](#)
- [Promundo's Program P: A Manual for Engaging Men in Fatherhood, Caregiving, and Maternal and Child Health](#)
- [Promundo's Program HMD: A Toolkit for Action](#)
- [Promundo's Manhood 2.0: A Curriculum Promoting a Gender-Equitable Future of Manhood](#)
- [Promundo's State of the World's Fathers reports](#)
- [Promundo's presentation at the National Sexual Assault Conference](#)

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