

Conference Note — “Who cares? Spotlight on Gender Equality and the Care Sector in International Development Cooperation”

Hybrid Conference on Thursday, 7 April 2022
 Berlin, Germany, at EUREF Campus

Background

Women and girls in all their diversity carry a **disproportionate share of paid and unpaid care and domestic work**. Globally, women and girls spend on average three times more time providing care than men and boys. This is estimated to add up to a total of seven more years of unpaid care and domestic work performed on average by women in comparison to men in their lifetimes.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing gender inequalities in paid and unpaid care work. This hinders gender-transformative change and sustainable economic development. **A gender-just transformation of the care economy is therefore urgently needed.**

Care work has been hiding in plain sight for too long – unrecognized, unaccounted for in decision-making. [...] There is no country in which this labor is equally shared. [...] Yet, the global response has fallen short.
 – Sima Bahous, Executive Director UN Women

This note contains the main findings from the conference that the Federal Republic of Germany, in the context of its G7 presidency this year, jointly organized with UN Women and ILO on April 7th, 2022. The various stakeholders that took part in the conference discussed best practices to overcome inequalities in care work,

incentives for investing in the care economy and relevant approaches and actions. These are summarized below.

The results of an economy that does not care can be seen in wars, poverty, and climate change [...]. If we created an invoice for all the unpaid [care] work, what would you earn monthly? – Aya Chebbi, Pan-African Youth and Feminist Activist

Facts & Figures

Speakers highlighted the following notable facts and figures on care work in their statements. Amongst them:



606 million women are unavailable for employment because of unpaid care work (vs. 41 million men) ([ILO](#))



Over 60% of the overall population works in the informal economy. 75% of all domestic workers (mostly women) are in informal employment ([ILO](#); [OECD](#))



Only 8% of all existing social and labor market measures in the world focus on the domain of care economy ([UN Women](#))



Investing more in the care economy could create 280 million jobs by 2030 and boost global GDP by \$4 trillion ([ILO](#))



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Good Practice: ILO 5R Framework for Decent Care Work

5Rs: Zooming in on Redistribution and Reduction



Central Approaches for Redistribution & Reduction:

- Maternity protection
- Paternity, parental, and other care leave policies
- Childcare services
- Long-term care services

Key Aspects raised by ILO:

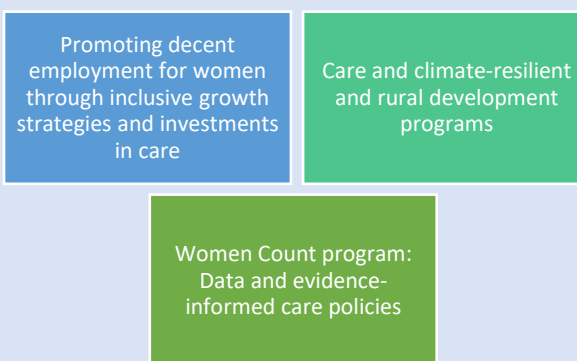
- ❖ Adopt more maternity leave laws in line with ILO Maternity Protection Convention 183 worldwide
- ❖ Improve paternity leave laws and coverage to promote and support men's care
- ❖ Solve childcare policy gap (mismatch between end of parent's care leave and beginning of school)
- ❖ Close coverage gap for workers in the informal economy and other vulnerable groups
- ❖ Expand universal childcare and more long-term care services for older citizens
- ❖ Invest more in care services and create transformative care policies

Good Practice: UN Women Toolkit and Portfolio on Care

UN Women Toolkit and Central Recommendations

- ❖ According to UN Women's gender assessments from 40 countries ([Dec. 2020](#)), the proportion of women with a 9% increase in weekly childcare hours rose from 24% to 36% compared to men (7-11%)
- ❖ The **updated Toolkit "From 3Rs to 5Rs: A Toolkit on Paid and Unpaid Care Work"** is a "How-To Guide" with helpful resources, successful policies and approaches to advance women's economic empowerment (the toolkit will be launched in June 2022 and shared soon)
- ❖ Central recommendations made by UN Women:
 - More gender-responsive public quality care services, law and policy reform
 - 3-10% of national income to be invested by governments in care economy
 - Join the [Global Alliance for Care](#)

UN Women's Portfolio on Care:





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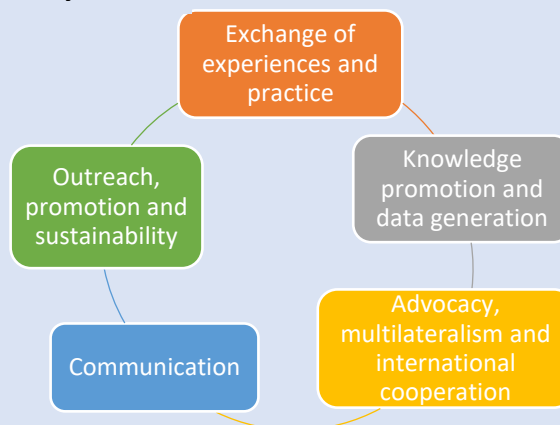
First Panel: Towards Evidence-based, Nationally Tailored Approaches

- **Covid-19** has increased the burden of unpaid care work. The additional workload mostly shifted to women while men more often remained in full-time employment. This unequal burden needs to be addressed because care work is a task for all of society. Care work must be (re)distributed between women and men.
- Setting up local, accessible, and safe care services needs to be part of development programs. For instance, **Japan** creates **care counselling and care services stations** to help women combine full-time employment and care work.
- The **G7 Gender Equality Advisory Council (GEAC)** proposes to **invest** an additional 2% of GDP in care infrastructure and to ensure that jobs created in the process comply with labor standards and ILO conventions. These interventions and measures need to be **tailored** to each nation and region, as suggested by Jutta Allmendinger, Chair of the GEAC, because there is no one-size-fits all-approach in care work.
- To be effective, care work policies need to be **evidence-based** and take **human rights** into account. Data on care work is only measured quantitatively but cognitive and organizational aspects also need to be included.
- Active engagement in care work is necessary. For instance, **Canada** invests in development programs to combat unpaid care work in low- and middle-income countries. In this regard, Jessica Woodroffe, Director of the **Gender and Development Network (GADN)**, emphasized that funding for care development programs should **not be tied to conditionality**.

- The proposal to **increase investments in the care sector** received positive reactions from the (online) audience. Comments highlighted the importance of considering **intersectionality**, especially concerning gender and disability as well as the role of care work on the grassroots level.

Good Practice: Global Alliance for Care

Priority Areas



- ❖ [The Global Alliance for Care](#) issued an urgent call to governments, international organizations, the private sector and civil society to address the issue of unpaid care work. It is the first multi-stakeholder alliance to take action on the issue of unpaid care work
- ❖ Participatory and collaboration-based membership, guided by five **priority areas** (see above)
- ❖ It sets out to build a community of practice, facilitate dialogue, share knowledge and act from the local to the global level, promoting a new societal paradigm that puts care work at the center of attention
- ❖ It works on synergies between governments, corporations, research center and civil society organizations
- ❖ Aspiring to grow, it aims **for all G7 members to join the Care Alliance**, to set care work on the international agenda



Second Panel: Key Actions for Investment in Care and (Policy)-Reforms in the Workspace

- Representing the Government of **Tanzania**, Hon. Minister Dorothy Gwajima noted that as one in three citizens in Tanzania is under the age of 9, the government strengthened childcare programs, especially at the community level. As a result, the number of female self-employed workers increased by 11%, as more women could pursue economic opportunities. Furthermore, commitments to invest in care services, law and policy reforms were made, including the **quantification of unpaid care work** and its integration into Tanzania's GDP. This strategy was applauded by other panel speakers and the audience.
- According to the **International Trade Union Confederation**, women must be put at the forefront of **job security**. To this end, the confederation urges stakeholders, especially governments, to drive care investments and to join the Global Alliance for Care.
- **ILO** strategies include adjustments at the **workplace** to accommodate care needs such as the establishment of breastfeeding rooms and nurseries. Moreover, programs for employer awareness, e.g., on mental health, are put in place to ease the additional burden that Covid-19 placed on women. By answering a question from the audience of how governments can intervene in this process, Jacqueline Mugo, Regional Vice President of the International Organisation of Employers, stated that governments and the private sector need to work together on strengthening social protection, for which **data collection** is needed.
- The **World Bank** included childcare as a **policy commitment** in last year's International Development Association

program, IDA20. Contributors and beneficiaries are held accountable to deliver actions on the subject matter.

Good Practice: Childcare Incentive Fund (World Bank)

- ❖ The World Bank launches the **Childcare Incentive Fund** to scale up quality, affordable childcare in developing countries – a critical investment to build the next generation of human capital and place women at the center of an inclusive global economic recovery. Smart investments in childcare can boost women's employment and productivity, child development outcomes, family welfare, business productivity and overall economic growth
- ❖ The Childcare Incentive Fund will support countries amongst others, to design and implement better childcare programs and provide evidence on the impacts of childcare on women's empowerment
- ❖ Goal: raise \$100 million to help low- and middle-income governments to **expand access to quality and affordable childcare**
- ❖ The Fund will **match country investments** in childcare on a \$1:\$1 basis (up to \$10 million per country), so that each grant helps to catalyze wider investments and returns
- ❖ **Melinda French Gates** calls for governments (including the G7) to **support the Fund** → childcare should be part of infrastructure investments

The Way Ahead

The G7 Care Conference has shed light on a central topic to advance gender equality that has long remained unaddressed on a global level. As UN Women emphasized, paid and unpaid care work has been a challenging issue for decades, but Covid-19 revealed the extent and importance of it once more.



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Care work needs to be included in development policies [...] Investments in care pay off. – Bärbel Kofler, State Secretary to the Federal Minister of Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany

All participants of the conference – speakers, panellists, and audience alike – agreed that it was a crucial political step that **care work** be put **on the agenda of the G7** in 2022.

Recommendations for the way forward are to:

- ❖ Provide more childcare services
- ❖ Build upon existing resources, such as ILO's 5R Framework
- ❖ Use the updated toolkit "From 3Rs to 5Rs: A Toolkit on Paid and Unpaid Care Work"(to be launched in June 2022)
- ❖ Use quantitative data for the assessment of care work
- ❖ Join the Global Care for Alliance
- ❖ Support the World Bank Childcare Incentive Fund
- ❖ Increase investments in social and care infrastructure
- ❖ Mainstream care work in international development cooperation

The above-mentioned recommendations on approaches and actions provide guidance for the way forward. They can lay the groundwork for the transformation towards decent care work.

The G7 and the G20 governments need to work together to create an enabling environment that will allow their countries and developing countries to invest in care and social protection – Anita Bhatia, Deputy Executive Director, UN Women

Overall, the conference showed broad consensus for establishing a more **gender-just and equal care economy**.