The Care Economy as basis for Women’s Economic Empowerment (WEE)

Introducing SDG 5.4.

Yllka Gërdovci
Regional Programme and Policy Specialist
Women’s Economic Empowerment
UN Women Arab States
SDG Target 5.4. calls for “recognizing and valuing unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate”

Indicator 5.4.1. Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location
Defining the care economy

Production of goods* and services necessary for physical, social, emotional wellbeing of children, elderly, ill, disabled as well as of healthy, prime-working age adults, including self-care; so as to allow them to function at a socially acceptable level of capability, comfort and safety.

Source: A Guide to Public Investments in the Care Economy, UN Women and ILO, March 2021
Defining the care economy

**Production of goods and services necessary for:**
- Physical, social, emotional wellbeing of children, elderly, ill and people with disabilities as well as of healthy, prime-working age adults, including self-care;
- So as to allow them to function at a socially acceptable level of capability, comfort and safety.

**INDIRECT Care Work**
- Unpaid work such as cooking, washing, cleaning, shopping, managing house, production for self-consumption*
- Non-care workers employed in care sectors such as administrators, cleaners, security workers, domestic workers

**DIRECT Care Work**
- Unpaid domestic work such as bathing and feeding a baby or a bed-bound ill person, helping a child with homework, accompanying an elderly or disabled person on a doctor’s visit
- Care workers employed in care sectors such as teachers, doctors, nurses, babysitters

*Source: A Guide to Public Investments in the Care Economy, UN Women and ILO, March 2021
Care economy

WOMEN CARRY OUT AT LEAST TWO AND A HALF TIMES MORE UNPAID HOUSEHOLD AND CARE WORK THAN MEN

Work distribution by sex and region

Time spent daily in unpaid care work and paid work, by sex, latest year (ILO)

Source: Care work and care jobs for the future of decent work, ILO Report 2018
Gender gap in unpaid work time ➔ gender gap in paid work time

- Gender gap in LFP and employment
- Gender jobs segregation
- Gender earnings and wealth gap
- Gender gap in political representation
- Gender gap in decision-making
# National targets for female LFP and GDP foregone by failing to meet them

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Foregone GDP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Increase by 12 percentage points (from 23%)</td>
<td>2030</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>Increase by 5 percentage points (from 18%)</td>
<td>2023</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>Increase by 7 percentage points (from 17%)</td>
<td>2025</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>Increase by 5 percentage points (from 23%)</td>
<td>2024</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>Increase by 8 percentage points (from 22%)</td>
<td>2030</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UN Women, 2021 Macroeconomic policy response and WEE, forthcoming
Interlinkages with other SDGs

1. No Poverty
2. Zero Hunger
3. Good Health and Well-being
4. Quality Education
5. Gender Equality
6. Clean Water and Sanitation
7. Affordable and Clean Energy
8. Decent Work and Economic Growth
9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
10. Reduced Inequalities
11. Sustainable Cities and Communities
12. Responsible Consumption and Production
13. Climate Action
14. Life Below Water
15. Life on Land
16. Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
17. Partnerships for the Goals
A Guide to Public Investments in the Care Economy

Policy Tool

UN Women – ILO Joint Programme Promoting Decent Employment for Women through Inclusive Growth Policies and Investments in Care

This policy support tool seeks to:

1. Identify the coverage gaps in care services (namely public healthcare, long-term care, early childhood care & education, and primary and secondary education).

2. Estimate the costs of public investments and expenditures for eliminating these coverage gaps.

3. Assess the various economic returns to such investments in the short- and the long-run.
UN Women and ILO Policy Tool

**Economic returns to investment in social care**

**Demand-side effects**
- Jobs generation
- Increase wage incomes
- Decrease income poverty
- Demand-led growth
  - Increase relative demand for women's labour
  - Decrease gender employment and earning gaps
  - Time- and income poverty

**Supply-side effects**
- Alleviate time constraints
- Increase women’s labour supply
- Improve productivity of workers with care responsibilities
- Increase in productivity and supply-led growth
- Access to ECEC by all children
- Enhanced human capital
- Decrease in socioeconomic inequalities
Need for policy intervention and investment in care economy

- A framework for action towards achieving relevant SDG targets
- Proposes policy actions
... the substantial contribution of caring labour to well-being both at the micro level of the household and at the macro level of the economy

Policy Actions:

- National level coordination on the care economy – harmonizing legislation
- Inclusion of unpaid care work in national statistics and data analysis (i.e. time-use surveys)
- Valuation of unpaid care work and exploring its linkages to other economic and social phenomena such as LFP, GDP, inequality and poverty
- Compensation of unpaid care work time through social transfers
... of unpaid care work involves reducing the burden for women and for society as a whole without compromising on the principle of access to universal quality care

**Policy Actions:**

- Public investment in social care service infrastructure
- Public investment in physical rural infrastructure
... unpaid care work in paid market work and within household

Policy Actions:

- Labour market regulation for work-life balance
  - Care leave and care insurance policies
  - Regulation of workplace hours
- Policies to eliminate gender discrimination in the labour market
Putting care at the center of economic recovery and transformation

Towards a paradigm shift

Instead of being reduced to a commodity, a personal choice or a family obligation, care is recognized as a public good.

Instead of freeriding on women’s unpaid and underpaid labor, society as a whole assumes the costs of quality care for all.

Workers in the care sector enjoy equal pay for work of equal value, with value being redefined to recognize social contributions, not merely market-based rewards.
Thank you for your attention!

Yllka Gërdovci Cancel
Regional Programme and Policy Specialist
Women’s Economic Empowerment
UN Women Regional Office for Arab States
yllka.gerdovci@unwomen.org