Unpaid care work and empowerment of women and girls

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What is care?

• ‘Care’ includes **direct care** of people, **housework** that facilitates caring for people (indirect care) and **volunteer community care** of people, and **paid** carers, cleaners, health and education workers.

Care is a **social good**, underpins all development progress.

Care sustains and reproduces society.

Markets depend on care for their functioning.

• **Unpaid care work**
Significance of UCW in women’s and girls’ lives

- Occupies large amounts of women’s and girls’ time -- restricting participation in civil, economic and social spheres
- Lack of leisure time -- reduction in women and girl’s well being
- Drudgery ....adverse health outcomes
- Income from paid work....eroded with costs of care substitution
- Who cares when women work in paid jobs ....reduction of care, adverse outcomes for care recipients
- A chain of paid work and unpaid care work...care deficit and social injustice, discrimination
Political Economy analysis of Care in Social Policy

• Research Question: where, why, when and how unpaid care concerns becomes more visible on domestic policy agendas?

• Success’ in incorporating unpaid care into the national public policy agenda implies that policies
  • (1) signal recognition of women’s contributions through unpaid care work;
  • (2) reduce the drudgery associated with performing care; and
  • (3) redistribute responsibilities for care (e.g. towards the state, community, men.

• Choice of Sectors: ECD and Social Protection
Care in Social Policy: Why ECD?

- Women carry out most of the childcare responsibilities (existing gender norms and patterns of division of labour within families and communities)
- Additional demands because of financial, environmental and social crisis- means women need to participate in the labour market; there is an increase in levels of care required.
- Balance between paid work and unpaid care work responsibilities
- Imbalance towards paid work can affect children adversely
- ECD programmes rely on mothers for programme participation
Why is Care relevant in Social Protection Policy?

• Women’s and girls’ uptake of social protection provisions are affected by their unpaid care work responsibilities

• Social protection provision can alleviate drudgery (for example through improved access to fuel and water, or increased support)

• Social policy cannot achieve gender equality without considering women’s unpaid care work and its impacts on their right to health, education, decent work and leisure

• Additional demands on families because of changes such as urbanisation, demographic changes etc. may lead to a care deficit
## A review of two sectors: Invisibility of Care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>No of policies reviewed</th>
<th>No. of policies which have a care intent</th>
<th>No. of countries that these policies were from</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Protection</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>23 (21%)</td>
<td>16 (out of 53) - SSA and LA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early childhood development</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>41 (15%)</td>
<td>33 (out of 142) - LA and SSA</td>
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Findings: Social Protection Policies

- Main focus on **redistribution** of care responsibilities from the family to the state (to allow women to enter into paid work).
- Nothing about redistribution within the family; **only 2** about reduction of drudgery.

- Unconditional cash transfers were more sensitive to care concerns (40% with some element of care).
- 21% of Public works programmes were care sensitive.
- Only 12% of Conditional cash transfers, and 9% of social transfers had care-sensitive aims and objectives.

http://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/123456789/2795/bitstream;jsessionid=26091DD43F6653874EFB06A98CA57843?sequence=1
Findings: Early childhood Development policies

- Overwhelming invisibility of care: 49%.
- Significant maternalistic focus - 15% of all policies spoke of women as mothers.
- Of the 40 successful policies, focus was largely on support for carers in terms of better parenting, including the inclusion of men as fathers for 40% of the policies.
- 30 out of 40 aimed to redistribution to state, but a large proportion (73%) of these were based on recognition of women’s roles in paid work;
- 2 policies recognised the role of children as care-givers;
- No policy for reduction of drudgery.
What factors lead to care-sensitive social policies?

• Evidence (on the benefits of incorporating concerns about unpaid care) seems to be a relatively insignificant factor.

• Context and the presence of ‘champions’ more significant.

• Regional spread of ideas, changing demographics, and shared discourses about gender roles most likely influence how unpaid care is incorporated into policy.

• But the lack of detailed information on contexts, actors and discourses makes it difficult to draw any more substantive conclusions.
Gaps in Social Policy

- The UNEQUAL distribution of unpaid care onto women and girls makes ‘empowerment’ programmes limited, individualised and unsustainable

- Unpaid care work is INVISIBLE
  - In Policy - Intent and implementation
  - In Research - Political economy analysis of processes; M&E, impact evaluations
  - In Programming - entry points, integration/ mainstreaming (women-related and general programmes)
  - Amongst donors, government officials, researchers
  - In budgeting - It has INADEQUATE INVESTMENT
Examining the reasons for these gaps

- Strategic essentialism undermining the concept of gender as relational
- Separate agendas, Disparate communities of practice - arising from a technocratic approach, funding struggles and silos of expertise
- Gender advocates portraying women as being unencumbered by domestic and reproductive responsibilities vs child rights groups take child as centre, mother as conduit - instrumental approach?
- System bias, structures of power
- Personal positionality
- Closed circuit of logic: weak evidence base
- STRATEGIC IGNORANCE
- Neo Liberal economic hegemony + patriarchal religious conservatism
Ways forward: Exploiting the cracks

- Expanding capitalism needs
- Women workers
- Requiring girls’ education
- More voice
Ratify ILO Convention 189
Pass Domestic Workers Act!
12 Countries in 2012
New Directions: Making care visible

- Increasing disasters and crises
- Women’s care work more visible
- Reveals the importance of care
“Across the world, millions of women still find that poverty is their reward for a lifetime spent caring, and unpaid care provision by women and girls is still treated as an infinite, cost-free resource that fills the gaps when public services are not available or accessible. This report calls for a fundamental shift in this status quo, as part of States’ fundamental human rights obligations.”

Conclusions

- Unpaid care work is critical to societal well being
- But it is unequally distributed and invisible
- Power plays a critical role in keeping care invisible
- Need to recognise unpaid care as work, reduce drudgery associated with it, and redistribute from women to men and from families to the state
- Needs a change of the economic model - well being rather than growth
- But successive small wins are equally important
- Increase in good quality public services as an essential policy ask
New Directions in Social Policy

- Ensure social policies take into account concerns of unpaid care: role of men, communities and the state; but also of development practitioners
- Increased access to public services - good quality childcare facilities, water, sanitation, healthcare, infrastructure
- Introducing unconditional cash transfers, increasing outreach, increasing value of social transfers
- Celebrating care as valuable and essential, including representing carers in decision making programmes
- Monitor and document impact of social policy provisions on women’s lives
- Build on good practice examples
- Recognition of women as mothers, workers and citizens
KEEP CALM AND CARRY ON!
Changing our economic model to one shaped by principles of altruism and solidarity