

# 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

	No of policies reviewed	No. of policies which have a care intent	No. of countries that these policies were from
Social Protection	107	23 (21%)	16 (out of 53) - SSA and LA
Early childhood development	270	41 (15%)	33 (out of 142) - LA and SSA



## 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



## New Directions: Demographic changes

Increasingly  
ageing  
population

Highlights  
need for care

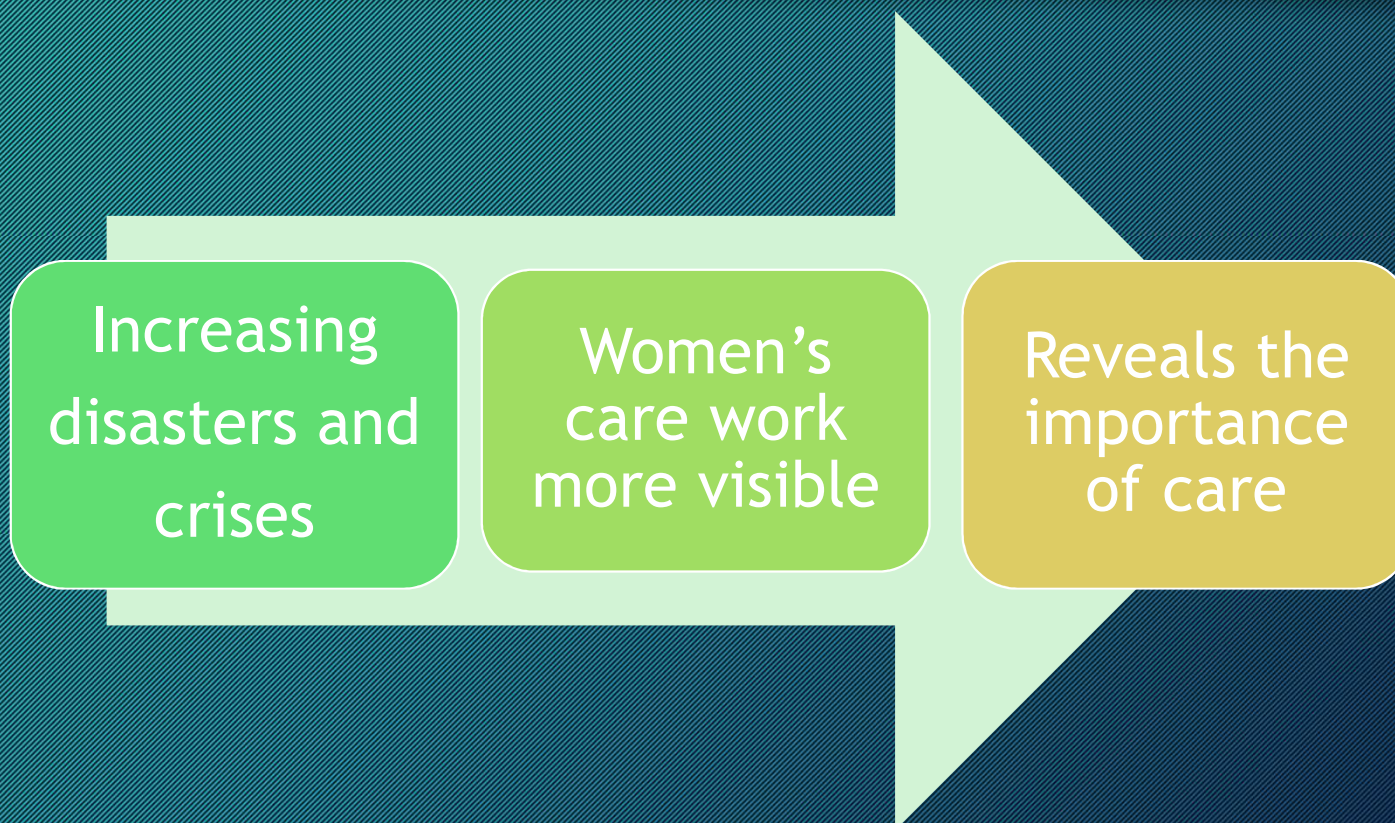
Care  
becomes a  
policy issue







## New Directions: making care visible





# New Directions: Care as a human rights issue



*"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."*

**UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights – [Report on unpaid care work](#) , September 2013**



# 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

