



## *High Level Side Event at the CSW 61 - Report*

### **Care policies in the Agenda 2030: Advancing the Triple R framework to Recognize, Reduce and Redistribute unpaid care work**

Wednesday 15 March 2017

The unequal distribution of unpaid care work is a critical factor for understanding structural constraints to women's economic empowerment, and participation and leadership more broadly. The side event discussed the different aspects of unpaid care work in different contexts and shared strategies and practical approaches to recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work in order to advance the implementation of the specific target 5.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The event was organized by Switzerland and supported by the Governments of Argentina, Costa Rica, Kenya, Iceland, the Philippines and UN Women, the OECD, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and Promundo.

**Introductory remarks** by Sylvie Durrer, Director, Federal Office for Gender Equality, Switzerland

**Moderation** by Shahra Razavi, Chief Research and Data Section, UN Women

#### **Panel Discussion:**

- 1) What works? Experiences and good practices to recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work
  - Emanuela Pozzan, ILO, Senior Advisor, ILO Office Beirut
  - Maria Hartl, IFAD, Senior Technical Specialist Gender and Social Equity
  - Gary Barker, Promundo, President and CEO
- 2) What is the role of a government in enabling better care policies? Statements by governments of Iceland, Philippines, Costa Rica, Argentina, Kenya

**Moderated Discussion with the Audience**, with contributions from Make Mothers Matter, Women in Informal Employment (WIEGO), International Women's Rights Action Watch-Asia Pacific, a Swiss private sector representative, the OECD (and the Asian Development Bank, not personally present).

**Closing remarks** by Purna Sen, Policy Director, UN Women

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#### **Summary and Key Messages**

- **The topic of unpaid care work looks back to a long history**, from being considered an issue of the private sphere to being now a target in the Sustainable Development Agenda, as the moderator, *Shahra Razavi*, UN Women, reminded in her introduction. Important to keep in mind that the inequality in the distribution of unpaid care work is not only between the genders, but also between higher and lower income groups, and thus redistribution is needed on different levels, between women and men, the family and the society and different social classes and groups. Also, reducing unpaid care work is about reducing the drudgery of the work, and not about the time we spend for care – we actually need more time for care!

- **Recognizing unpaid care work** means - not only, but also - recognizing the economic value of the work done, to a large degree by women. Conservative estimates suggest that the inclusion of unpaid care work in economic calculations would increase the global GDP by 10 trillion \$ annually, as Emanuela Pozzan, ILO, highlighted. Moreover, the amount of unpaid care work is probably underestimated due to simultaneous activities (notably childcare and different household activities), a remark made by the moderator. Time use surveys that would allow for better accountability are time and cost intensive and comprehensive Triple R public policy approaches still rare. Also care work that is paid is a growing market, in particular domestic work and elderly care. Equal pay for work of equal value and decent work standards as set out in the ILO convention 189 on domestic work are of utmost importance.
- **Reducing unpaid care work** means reducing the burden of hard and time intensive work that often prevents women's education and economic empowerment and is detrimental for their health and wellbeing. Investments in rural infrastructure development has to go along with labour saving technologies and approaches, such as time saving water, sanitation and irrigation systems, clean energy, safe roads and storage spaces and access to tools and machinery or child care facilities in markets. All these measures have the potential to result in substantial reduction of women's work load and time poverty, as Maria Hartl, IFAD, points out. Moreover, investments in labor saving technologies do not only reduce time, but also increase efficiency and productivity and leave more time for care responsibilities.
- **To achieve the redistribution of unpaid care work** a cultural shift is needed, so Gary Barker, Promundo: a quarter of all men worldwide have never participated in household tasks and care work. Men are also fathers and need to engage more pro-actively in their care role, because the economic empowerment of women does not reduce the responsibilities and work at home. A better redistribution is thus indispensable. To strengthen men's care role, it is important to involve men already around pregnancy & birth. This could be supported by health professionals. There is a need for countries to have national plans and targets for redistribution of the care work, with incentives, from parental leave and parent training among others, to nudge men and boys to do closer to 50 percent of the daily unpaid care work in their homes. The business and corporate world can support this by supporting a better work-life balance and also offering specific incentives for men who tend not to use flexible work arrangements as much as women do.
- **Policies undertaken by the countries** addressing the challenges include measures to improve social policies, labour rights and pension systems as well as promoting work-life balance and stronger participation of men in family work and care. In Switzerland for example, despite high educational level, many women face difficulties pursuing a professional career or re-entering the labour market due to the limited number of public and private child care support structures, and take on part-time jobs. As a consequence, they earn less and are under-represented in economic leadership positions, with negative financial impact on their social security protection. Swiss policies addressing these gaps are the provision of financial incentives to increase cantonal and communal subsidies for day-care, removing negative incentives of the tax system and reducing the gender pension gap in the old-age insurance system, and promoting well-designed part-time work and flexible work arrangements by both public and private employers (although these are not always used for sharing more care responsibilities, but rather for individual leisure activities, as was highlighted by the Swiss private sector representative). Costa Rica and Argentina emphasized that all - the state, the economy and the family - have to share the responsibility. Time use surveys are important, for designing more effective policies, but they also raise awareness, which is equally important. Care has thus been included as a critical factor in their social policies, based on the principle that all those giving care have also the right to receiving care: Efforts have thus been made to formalize working arrangements for domestic workers to ensure their access to social protection and labour rights. Island emphasized that care is a human right and an economic question. With the introduction of a three months

paternity leave, gender roles do change and fathers do take over more responsibilities in the family. Also Kenya introduced a 14 day paternity leave which is compulsory and cooperates closely with the private sector to promote care friendly working conditions. The Philippines promote policies for recognition and redistribution, such as joint parental authority, access to social protection, and investments in child care which is covered through the gender budgeting law that assigns 5% of all budgets for gender programs. Promoting the parental abilities of fathers is another measure, such as awareness trainings for men, i.e. in the military. Finally, as a sending country, the Philippines have adopted a domestic worker law to improve the protection of the many female migrants working abroad.

- **Interventions and questions from the floor** focused on the unsolved questions of child care and social security of women in the informal sector who work long hours, often in risky environments. They have no time for their children or have to take them along in child unfriendly environments, therefore public provision of child care and basic social protection is key. Also professionalization of care services in the informal sector can be a strategy, but it requires public support to make it sustainable and accessible for the very poor (WIEGO). Recognizing unpaid care work not only as a burden, but as valuable and important work and investment in the society entitling to rights and protection as any other work was a claim made by MMM, echoing the moderators introductory remark on 'less drudgery and more care'. IWRAP-AP pointed to the ambiguous incentives of the global care chain: As a growing market it opens new income opportunities for women of low income countries. However, with the migration for domestic work the traditional gender roles for women are reproduced and with it also the limited professional and economic perspectives. Promoting access of women migrants to a variety of professional sectors is thus important to promote sustainable economic empowerment. OECD emphasized the importance of company and cultural obstacles in better sharing of unpaid work. In Japan and Korea, for example, where entitlements to fathers' leave are generous in international comparison, men rarely make use of parental leave. A new OECD report "Dare to Share" examines policy measures to promote better sharing of both paid and unpaid work between partners with children which is crucial to advance gender equality; cultural change, however, remains a big challenge. The Asian Development Bank statement highlighted that a study conducted in 2015 shows that pathways through which infrastructure contributes to time poverty reduction and influence gender division of labor differ significantly across types of infrastructure. While water supply has significant impacts in reducing the time and drudgery of women in collecting and managing water, it has by itself little impact on changing the existing gender division of labor, as the social norms remain the same. Electricity has also significant impact in reducing the amount of time spent by women on care and domestic work; compared with other infrastructure, electricity also provides more likelihood of some of the time saved being used for paid work and accessing information.
- **Economic empowerment of women** can only be achieved if we recognize care as an essential activity for the family, the society and the economy, emphasized Purna Sen, UN Women, in her closing remarks. While unpaid care work is essential to the functioning of the economy, it often goes uncounted and unrecognized as labour markets fail to acknowledge its vital contribution enabling the productive economy to function. Therefore, we need first and foremost recognize the importance, but also the related costs - as investment in our social and economic development. Time use surveys are an instrument that can highlight and measure women's and men's unpaid work as contributions in Systems of National Accounts. The promotion of women's economic empowerment and gender equality will require a transformative approach to care work. This means radically changing care provision, designing a policy agenda that recognizes and values care, and promoting policies that reduce and redistribute care workloads.