

# Care work and care jobs for the future of decent work

## Key messages and findings

### **Care work is vital to humanity, economies and the future of work**

- Major global transformations are affecting the demand and supply of both paid and unpaid care work.
- Societies and economies are based on an unsustainable care model that relies on the extensive and gender-unequal provision of unpaid care work as well as insufficient and often low quality care jobs.
- If not adequately addressed, current deficits in care service provision and its quality will create a severe and unsustainable global care crisis and increase gender inequalities at work.
- Paid care work is and will remain an important source of employment, especially for women, since the relational nature of care work limits the potential substitution of robots and other technologies for human labour.
- Urgent action and transformative policies are needed for a high road to care work.

### **Demand for care work is rising**

- In 2015, 2.1 billion people were in need of care (1.9 billion children under the age of 15, of whom 0.8 billion were under 6 years, and 0.2 billion older persons). By 2030, this number is predicted to increase by 200 million, including 100 million older persons.
- Currently, an estimated 110–190 million people with disabilities could require assistance throughout their entire lives.
- Households have become smaller and the traditional extended family's role has been reduced. In 2018, the majority of working-age population live in nuclear families (namely 43.5 per cent or 2.4 billion people).
- 300 million people of working age are in single-headed households. 78.4 per cent of these households are headed by women, who shoulder both the financial and care responsibilities.
- Increase in women's employment in certain countries results in an erosion of the availability of unpaid care work.

### **Unpaid care is “work” but remains invisible, unrecognized and unaccounted for in decision-making**

- In 2013, land-marking labour statistic standards set out that unpaid care is work.
- Unpaid carers meet the large majority of care needs across the world.
- In 2018, 16.4 billion hours are spent in unpaid care work every day. This is equivalent to 2.0 billion people working eight hours per day with no remuneration.
- Were such services to be valued on the basis of an hourly minimum wage, they would amount to 9 per cent of global GDP, which corresponds to US\$11 trillion, PPP (purchasing power parity 2011) in 2016.

### **Women perform the large majority of unpaid care work**

- Across the world, women perform 76.2 per cent of the total of hours of unpaid care work, namely on average 3.2 times more time than men. In all regions, the time spent by women in unpaid care work increases with the presence of young children.

- When both work for pay or profit and unpaid care work are accounted together, the working day is on average longer for women (7 hours and 28 minutes) than it is for men (6 hours and 44 minutes). This makes women consistently time poorer than men.
- Men's contribution to unpaid care work has in some countries increased over the past 20 years. Yet, the pace of change is so slow that it will take 210 years (i.e. until 2228) to close the gender gap in unpaid care work in these countries.

### **Engagement in unpaid care work adversely affects women's employment prospects**

- Unpaid care work constitutes the main barrier to women's participation in labour markets, while a more equal sharing of unpaid care work between women and men is associated with higher levels of women's labour force participation.
- 606 million women, as against only 41 million men, are either unavailable for employment or not seeking a job due to unpaid care work in 2018.
- These 647 million women and men who are full-time unpaid carers represent the largest pool of participants lost to the labour market across the world. A 2017 ILO-Gallup report found that, globally, a majority of women would prefer to work at paid jobs, including those who are not in the workforce (58 per cent), and that men agree.
- Women living with children less than 5 years of age have the lowest employment rates (47.6 per cent) compared not only with fathers (87.9 per cent), and non-fathers (78.2 per cent), but also with non-mothers of children aged 0–5 years (54.4 per cent).
- A “motherhood employment penalty” is found globally and consistently across regions for women living with young children. This contrasts with a “fatherhood employment premium”, with fathers reporting the highest employment-to-population ratios throughout the world.
- The global “parenthood employment gap” (namely, the difference between the employment-to-population ratio for fathers and that for mothers of young children) is 40.3 per cent.
- Compared with single women, the probability of being in the labour force is 16.6 percentage points lower for women living in extended households. While men in the same situation are 0.5 percentage points more likely to be active in the labour market compared with single men.

### **Unpaid care work is hampering women's job quality**

- Unpaid care work is one of the main obstacles to women moving into better quality jobs. It affects the number of hours spent by women in work for pay or profit, impacting their earnings.
- Globally, employed women work shorter hours for pay or profit than adult men and non-mothers of children aged 0–5 years.
- Living with at least one young child results in a gender gap in hours worked for pay or profit of almost 5 hours per week. This gap is the largest for mothers in Europe and Central Asia (9 hours and 12 minutes).
- Women with care responsibilities are also more likely to be self-employed, to work in the informal economy and to be less likely to contribute to social security than other women and men.

### **Care work is a significant source of employment globally, particularly for women**

- 381 million (249 million women and 132 million men) are engaged in care work globally. This represents 11.5 per cent of total global employment, 19.3 per cent of global female employment and 6.6 per cent of global male employment.
- 123 million care workers are employed in education, 92 million in health and social work.
- 70 million are domestic workers, of which 49 million are women.
- 72 million non-care workers working in care sectors and 24 million care workers working outside care sectors.

### **Poor job quality for care workers leads to poor quality care work**

- Care workers are frequently migrants and working in the informal economy under poor conditions and for low pay.
- Nurses and midwives constitute the biggest occupational group in the most feminized health-care occupations. Their wages are frequently low.
- Personal care workers – most of them home-based – are confronted by low wages and dire working conditions, and are likely to be exposed to discriminatory practices.
- Across country's income groups, the status, pay and benefits of early childhood personnel are less favourable than those of primary teachers, which can lead to low levels of job satisfaction and low retention rates.
- Domestic workers experience some of the worst working conditions across the care workforce and are particularly vulnerable to exploitation.

### **Investment in care policies and care jobs makes sense but still few transformative policies exist**

- In 2016, only 77 out of 184 countries (42 per cent) met the minimum standards on paid maternity leave set out in the ILO Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183) and 57 out of 167 countries (39 per cent) did not have any statutory leave provision for fathers.
- Universal access to quality childcare services is far from being realised, especially in low- and middle-income countries. Globally, gross enrolment ratios in early childhood education services for children under 3 was only 18.3 per cent in 2015.
- Only in a few high-income countries does the State take a leading role in funding long-term care services. Long-term care services are close to non-existent in most African, Latin American and Asian countries.

### **A high road scenario requires doubling current levels of investment in education, health and social work by 2030**

- Doubling investments in the care economy in order to implement the high road to care work would result in the creation of 475 million jobs in care sectors by 2030. This is equivalent to additional 269 million jobs compared with the 206 million in care sectors in 2015 (an increase of 130 per cent).
- Meeting the SDGs in education and health so as to close the care deficits would result in total public and private expenditures on care service provision of US\$18.4 trillion, corresponding to about 18.3 per cent of total projected GDP of the 45 countries in 2030.
- This job creation potential will be driven by additional 66 million jobs in health and social work and 54 million jobs in education compared with 2015 levels. These additional 120 million jobs in the care sectors will in turn generate 149 million indirect jobs.

- If investment in care service provision does not increase by at least 6 percentage points of global GDP by 2030 from the current 8.7 per cent of global GDP (as of 2015), deficits in coverage will increase and the working conditions of care workers will deteriorate.

#### **A high road to care work: The key recommendations of the 5R Framework for Decent Care Work**

- The high road to care work calls for the provision of good-quality care, benefiting both unpaid carers and care recipients, and providing decent work for care workers. The high road is feasible and calls for transformative measures in five main policy areas: care, macroeconomics, labour, social protection and migration.
- Good-quality care employment that promotes the achievement of the SGDs and benefits all involved care workers requires significant investment in both health-care services, social work and education.
- Closing the large coverage gaps in early childhood care and education and in long-term care can become the main driver of the expansion of future employment in care services.
- Financing the expansion of care services requires expanding countries' fiscal space. Investment in quality care services can be a strategic policy intervention to enhance women's economic empowerment through creating decent employment opportunities in care sectors and beyond.
- The policy recommendations and measures needed to achieve the high road to care work should be inspired by a *5R Framework for Decent Care Work*: recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work; reward paid care work, by promoting more and decent work for care workers; and guarantee care workers' representation, social dialogue and collective bargaining.