

Unpaid care

A priority for the post-2015 development goals and beyond

Summary

The unpaid care work that women and girls do sustains families, communities and whole societies - and yet it has been consistently ignored and taken for granted in public policy and in development efforts. It appears that now, finally, there is an emerging consensus around its importance, based on an ever-growing body of evidence on the impact of unpaid care work on gender equality, women's rights and poverty.

The Gender and Development Network is delighted that women's disproportionate burden of unpaid care is now being discussed in the context of the post-2015 global development framework. In all countries, recognising, reducing and redistributing unpaid care work can have a major positive impact on achieving gender equality, realising women's rights and in meeting other development goals, by freeing up women's time and boosting their social status, earning power and political participation.

But there is still a risk it could be left out of the final post-2015 goals, partly due to some misunderstandings of the issue. Looking back on this process in 10 or 15 years, this exclusion would be cause for great regret; just as the omission of violence against women from the Millennium Development Goals – in the face of claims that it was a 'cultural' issue and not relevant to development - is now seen as a clear oversight.

This is not about providing 'wages for housework', nor about reducing the overall amount of care provided, nor preventing women from making their own choices about when and how to provide care. The goal is to ensure care work is more fairly shared between women and men, and better supported by the State in the form of accessible public services and investment in technology and infrastructure. All people should be able to enjoy high quality care, but the costs and burdens should be more evenly distributed, and caregivers should not have to sacrifice their rights, income or opportunity.

The heavy and unequal burden of unpaid care work borne by women and girls – common to every country - is a major barrier to achieving gender equality and realising their human rights. The time and opportunity costs restrict women's ability to earn

income from paid work, undermine girls and women's education, and prevent their full participation in politics and public affairs, while also adversely affecting their health. It has the greatest impact on the poorest women (who cannot afford private services or domestic technologies, and often live in areas underserved by public services), perpetuating their poverty and increasing their social exclusion. It also entrenches inequality on class, racial and ethnic lines.

Negative stereotypes of care as 'women's work' also assign women and girls inferior social status and isolate them in the home. This in turn has negative impacts on a range of social and economic goals, including poverty reduction and the promotion of children's health and education. It also makes for bad policy decisions and limits economic productivity.

The briefing includes recommendations for a target on unpaid care under a standalone gender equality goal in the SDGs, building on the proposals of the Open Working Group. The target would set out the need to fully recognise the extent of unpaid care work, and reduce the amount of care work poor women do - through fairer sharing between men and women and provision of care and public services by governments.

We propose indicators for this target that would foster and assess progress in a number of areas. Crucially all of these are measurable, and many are based on data that is already being collected.

Finally, in section 5, we look at practical ways to achieve change, by setting out different approaches and measures – ranging from scaling up piped water infrastructure to tackling social norms through education. We highlight success stories across different countries to show that these actions are feasible and can have a profound impact in removing barriers to the achievement of gender equality and women's rights.

Ultimately, the aim for 2015, 2030 and beyond is to create societies in which unpaid care work is recognised and valued by governments and the general public as a crucial social and economic good. Unpaid care work would be understood as a collective responsibility - to be shared more equally between women and men, households and the State. High-quality care would be accessible to all, including the poorest people; and people who perform unpaid care work would have greater choices, opportunities, and voice to participate in politics, the workplace, social and cultural life.

The inclusion of a target on unpaid care work in the post-2015 agenda would represent an important symbolic and practical step towards this aim, providing much needed political focus and resources. Progress towards the target should improve the well-being of care-givers and care-receivers, and have a positive impact on gender equality, sustainable development, poverty reduction, and economic growth.

1. Introduction - Why now?

After years of exclusion from development debates, unpaid care work is now gaining recognition as a major determinant of gender inequality, women's empowerment and poverty. With negotiations around the post-2015 development agenda (the Sustainable Development Goals or SDGs) in full swing, a striking consensus is emerging about the importance of this issue.¹ While the post-2015 framework will not be a solution to all the problems and injustices resulting from the unequal distribution and under-valuation of unpaid care work, it is a potential channel through which to make progress; and an opportunity which must be seized.

The aim is to foster a more equal sharing of unpaid care between women and men, and ensure care is better supported through public services and resources. It is not, as is sometimes thought, about paying 'wages for housework'. Neither is the goal to reduce the overall amount of care provided – far from it – it is to reduce the amount of time and drudgery it takes to provide a high quality level of care, and to share responsibility for its provision more fairly. Moreover, this is about *increasing* women's choices, not preventing women from choosing, for example, to care for their children full-time.

Importantly, women's overwhelming responsibility for unpaid care work is not a 'cultural' issue to be relegated to the private sphere: it is a global phenomenon with profound social and economic impacts. Only too recently, violence against women was seen as a private, 'cultural' issue with no relevance to development – so much so that it was not included in the Millennium Development Goals. There is now near-universal consensus that this was a grave oversight. We must not make the same mistake with unpaid care, especially given that States and civil society groups from very different countries and regions – ranging from Europe to Latin America to the G77 - have emphasized the need for it to be included in the post-2015 agenda.²

Below we lay out the compelling reasons why unpaid care work should be a priority issue for the post-2015 framework, and describe how a target and indicators on unpaid care could be formulated. In the final section, we present some practical proposals for *how* countries can make progress towards recognising, reducing and redistributing unpaid care work – under the auspices of the SDGs and beyond. In this we have drawn on work on unpaid care by members of the Gender and Development Network (GADN), outlined in the final textbox.

2. Why focus on unpaid care work?

2.1 Women's disproportionate burden

Women's disproportionate burden of unpaid care work is a major factor in creating and perpetuating gender inequality. It limits women's progress, rights and opportunities in all spheres of life – including education, employment and political participation.

Unpaid care work is also central to the functioning of the economy and society. If included in national accounts, the unpaid care economy would represent between 15 to over 50 percent of national Gross Domestic Products.³

What is unpaid care work?

- Domestic work: cooking and food preparation, cleaning, washing clothes, water and fuel collection.
- Direct care of persons: including children, older persons, persons with disabilities, and able-bodied adults.⁴
- Unpaid care work may take place in the household or in the wider community, but in this briefing we focus mainly on the work done in/for the household.⁵

In every country and region of the world, **women perform the majority of unpaid care work** – and work longer hours than men overall.⁶ The 2012 World Development Report found that globally women devote 1 to 3 hours more a day to housework than men; 2 to 10 times the amount of time a day to care (of children, elderly, and the sick), and 1 to 4 hours less a day to market activities.⁷ Other research had similar findings - on average, women spend twice as much time on household work as men and four times as much time on childcare.⁸

Women living in poverty have particularly heavy unpaid care workloads, because they cannot afford private services or domestic technologies, and often live in areas underserved by infrastructure and public services. For many of these women, especially those who have to collect water and fuel for domestic use, their care work is a demanding full-time job⁹, with no pay and little recognition or status. The unequal distribution of unpaid care work also creates and entrenches inequality along class, race and ethnicity lines. Often, minority and migrant women are most severely affected, forced to combine badly paid work with care for their own household, with very limited access to services and social protection.¹⁰ This also has international ramifications, as growing numbers of women leave the Global South to take on jobs abroad as domestic workers in richer destination countries, while family members that remain at home must reallocate care responsibilities in their absence – usually to older women or girls.¹¹

2.2 International agreements

The need to count, value and redistribute unpaid care work, and ensure it is not an obstacle to women's rights and opportunities, was emphasized twenty years ago in the **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**.¹² International human rights law also establishes several legally binding obligations that compel States to address the unequal distribution of unpaid care work, given its profound impact on women's rights.¹³ However, unpaid care work has still not been given the recognition (both in national policy and global development policy) that it needs and deserves.

2.3 The impact of unpaid care on women and girls

Women's income, social status, rights and opportunities are profoundly limited by their 'role' as the primary providers of unpaid care due to time constraints, social isolation in the household, and the low status given to care work and those who do it. Reducing the unpaid care work women do would thus remove major obstacles to their economic and political empowerment.

Paid work

Unpaid care work creates a significant gender inequality in work hours: women work longer hours than men, but are only paid for 25- 50 percent of their working hours, where men are paid for 60-90 percent of their hours worked.¹⁴ Women's disproportionate share of unpaid care work limits their time and opportunities for decent paid work. In Latin America and the Caribbean, over half of women aged 20-24 cited their unpaid care work as their main reason for not seeking a job outside the home (more than the number of their peers in the education system).¹⁵ Unpaid care work also contributes to the gender pay gap and forces women into informal and precarious work settings – partly because of their more limited opportunities to access decent formal work, but also because they need flexible working hours. Gender stereotypes are rife in the labour market, defining work in caring professions as naturally feminine and low-skilled, thereby justifying their low pay and low status – with particular impact on women of colour and migrants.

The distribution of unpaid care work thus affects women's income, savings and pensions and perpetuates their economic disempowerment, in the household and in wider society. 80 percent of family caregivers in South Africa have reported that their income is reduced because of their care work.¹⁶

Education

The right to education is also impacted: some girls may be withdrawn from school to help with domestic chores and care of younger siblings; many more will have their time for study or school activities cut short by domestic responsibilities. A survey in 16 countries found that 10 percent of girls aged 5-14 perform household chores for 28 hours or more weekly (approximately twice the hours spent by boys), with a measurable impact on their school attendance.¹⁷ Later in life, women overall have less time for further education or training opportunities than men because of their care responsibilities.

Health

The lack of time and money may also block women's access to health services, which is particularly problematic because heavy care workloads can take a huge toll on health. Care work can be arduous, emotionally stressful, and even dangerous (for example through exposure to communicable diseases or fumes/burns from cooking stoves)¹⁸. Studies show that HIV/AIDS caregivers experience a negative impact on physical and mental health.¹⁹

Violence

The distribution of care work exacerbates the gendered power imbalances that make women vulnerable to violence. Caring responsibilities can also isolate women who experience domestic violence, thereby constraining their access to services, support or opportunities to secure their rights. Meanwhile, in some contexts women and girls are at risk of assault while fetching fuel or water.

Care crises and budget cuts

In countries heavily affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, women and girls provide between 70 and 90 percent of the care to people living with HIV/AIDS²⁰, and many of them are being pulled out of paid work to take care of the ill or dying²¹. Rather than boosting public health budgets, many state policies increasingly rely on unpaid home-based care: essentially shifting the burden of care from public institutions to poor families, and from public health workers to very poor women who already carried a disproportionate burden of unpaid care work.²² The long-term social and economic costs of this strategy have been greatly underestimated; women's disproportionate role in providing this care intensifies their poverty and insecurity, and that of their dependents.²³

Nor is such a phenomenon confined to developing countries: austerity policies implemented in developed countries over recent years have also slashed healthcare and disability care budgets, meaning that households have to fill the gaps in care created. For the most part, it is women living in poverty who are meeting these unavoidable care needs at ever-increasing cost to their well-being and steadily eroding their coping mechanisms.²⁴

Political influence

Unpaid care work can be a major obstacle to women's ability to participate in politics and public affairs – from community decision-making forums to national parliaments. This is partly due to time constraints and practical difficulties (especially without access to free or affordable childcare). It is also due to the pervasive gender stereotypes that stifle their political voice by dictating that women's 'place is in the home' while men dominate the public sphere.

Social status

Gender stereotypes related to family, care and work are pervasive and pernicious in and across every society – for example casting men as breadwinners and women as carers and nurturers. These create constrained social roles for women and girls, limiting their power, choices, dignity, rights and opportunities – and casting them as second-class citizens. Transgressing or challenging these stereotypes can be met with emotional, verbal, physical and sexual violence against women.

2.4 Broader impacts on development and society

Failure to recognise, support and share the substantial amount of care work done by women and girls has a negative knock-on effect on other social and developmental goals.

Poverty reduction

For the reasons given above and more besides, the gendered distribution of unpaid care work obstructs progress towards gender equality. This has an impact far beyond the personal, given the positive correlation between poverty reduction, economic growth²⁵ and increased gender equality. Evidence clearly shows that poverty reduction measures are less effective when women are left behind and where gender inequality is high.²⁶

Children's health and education

When women are weighed down with unpaid care work, their time and income poverty also impacts on their family, including the health and education of their children – as they may not be able to afford the time or out-of-pocket costs of schooling or healthcare. Lack of public services and social grants to support unpaid care work also affects the quality of care that the poorest women are able to provide to their children, despite their constant efforts. This perpetuates the transmission of poverty and disadvantage to the next generation, with girls more likely to be removed from school when money is tight.²⁷

Productivity and economic growth

Time spent by women on unpaid care work can lead to reduced productivity. According to the IMF, there is “ample evidence that when women are able to develop their full labour market potential, there can be significant macroeconomic gains”.²⁸ However, unpaid care work represents a major obstacle to women's greater participation in the workforce. Recent census data from India shows that 45 percent of working age women – around 160 million women - are not in the workplace and are confined solely to domestic duties.²⁹ Furthermore, economic growth strategies that aim to harness women's potential and productivity by promoting their greater participation in employment, higher education or vocational training are doomed to failure if they ignore the barriers created by unpaid care work – or the impact on women's health and wellbeing if they have to combine paid and unpaid work without adequate support. Many women will be unable to, for example, take employment opportunities if they do not have access to affordable childcare.

In contrast, measures that explicitly seek to reduce and redistribute women's unpaid work can have major positive effects: studies show that reducing the household time burdens on women could increase agricultural labour productivity by 15 percent and capital productivity by as much as 44 percent in some countries.³⁰ Investments in areas such as water, electricity and transport infrastructure would serve not only to reduce women's unpaid working hours, but would also have positive effects on the production of goods and services in the subsistence economy and the market economy.

Bad policy decisions

Failure to recognise the importance and extent of unpaid care can also cause policy-makers to misunderstand the actual economic contributions of men and women, as well as to overlook time poverty³¹ and the constraints it imposes. This can lead to misinformed policy decisions with bad outcomes, especially for the poorest women.³² For example, the gaps created by cutting or privatising services such as water, healthcare, or childcare are usually filled by women's unpaid labour: walking further to a free water point, or cutting back on paid work hours to take care of children and ill relatives, leaving the household more time-stressed and income-poor. Such policies therefore often have severe hidden or unrecognised costs – in terms of money, time and labour for poor households, and knock-on effects on the economy as a whole.

Environmental sustainability

Unpaid care work is also strongly relevant to environmental and natural resource sustainability, given that women have a large role in natural resource/land use and stewardship, and that environmental degradation such as desertification and deforestation has a major impact on women's unpaid care work – for example giving them longer journeys to collect water or fuel.³³ Environmental degradation and changes in ecosystems and food systems also seriously challenges women's ability to feed and sustain their families and increases the time they have to spend to do so.³⁴

3. The post-2015 development agenda: a unique opportunity

The post-2015 development agenda is a major opportunity to provide long overdue recognition to unpaid care work, showing that the international community acknowledges the extent and value of unpaid care work in all societies. Hence, alongside many other State and non-State actors, GADN considers it essential to include a target on reducing and redistributing women's unpaid care work under a gender equality goal in the post-2015 framework.

3.1 The benefits of including unpaid care

The benefits of progress towards such a goal could be substantial; both on achieving gender equality and in meeting other development goals, by freeing up women's time and boosting their socio-economic status, access to decent work, human rights enjoyment and political participation. It would represent a hugely valuable first step towards the profound changes necessary in how our societies view, value, provide and support care.

- a) Empowering women through extra time, income and opportunities
 - Increasing opportunities for decent work – boosting their income and economic empowerment
 - Ensuring domestic responsibilities do not interfere with women and girls' right to education

- Increasing their ability to participate in politics and public affairs – by easing the practical and social barriers to engagement
- b) Upholding women’s dignity, autonomy and human rights
 - Reducing their vulnerability to violence
 - Improving their mental and physical health
 - Tackling damaging and constraining gender stereotypes
- c) Boosting overall progress towards other development goals and targets, including:
 - Making progress towards the poverty goal/targets more effective and inclusive, ensuring the poorest women are not left behind
 - Enabling better more equal progress towards targets on education, health, political participation, hunger, energy, decent work, and environmental sustainability.

3.2 Suggested target

The Final Outcome Document of the Open Working Group (OWG) on Sustainable Development Goals includes a target (target 5.4) on unpaid care work under Proposed Goal 5: ‘Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls’.³⁵ The wording has evolved from previous drafts of the goals and targets produced by the OWG.

Target 5.4 on unpaid care

Wording of unpaid care target in OWG Final Outcome Document of 19 July 2014:
“recognize and value 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”³⁶

Wording of unpaid care target in OWG zero draft of 30 June 2014:
“recognize and redistribute unpaid care and domestic work through shared responsibility within the family and the provision of appropriate public services”³⁷

GADN is delighted that the Final Outcome Document includes a target on unpaid care. At this point in time, the inclusion of unpaid care in the post-2015 framework would represent substantial ‘recognition’ of unpaid care work in itself, and have significant positive knock-on effects. While we suggest some improvements to the wording below, we emphasize that the main objective is to retain the target under a gender goal.

GADN comments on the proposed target wording:

- The recognition of the importance of public services, infrastructure and social protection is very welcome, as these are all important avenues for reducing and redistributing unpaid care work.
- The target would ideally specify the need to ‘reduce’ and ‘redistribute’ unpaid care work (as in previous OWG drafts), rather than just ‘recognize and value’. Reduction is tangible and measurable, and decreasing the drudgery and time burden of unpaid care work for poor women is very achievable and potentially transformative (see box below). In addition, redistribution of unpaid care work – through the promotion of shared responsibility within the household but much more besides - is a core element in promoting gender equality.
- It would be preferable to spell out men and women rather than referring only to the family or household – as shared responsibility only by women and girls in the household would not have the positive effects sought.
- The clause ‘as nationally appropriate’ is regrettable, given that goals and targets are intended to be universal; and such a clause does not appear in other targets. Besides, appropriate benchmarks and indicators will be set at the national level.
- The target (and all other targets under the gender goal) should be time-bound, as it is just as achievable, measurable and important as targets under other goals in the framework.

GADN suggested wording for a target on unpaid care

by 2030, recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid domestic and care work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection, and the promotion of shared responsibility between men and women.

Even if the final target does not include the wording of ‘reduce’ and ‘redistribute’, or specify the crucial channels of public services, infrastructure and social protection, these will be important modes of implementation, in order to reach *any* target related to unpaid care work. As such, these can be partly captured under indicators as outlined in the next section.

Reduction, Redistribution and Recognition

Reduction implies that the time burden and drudgery of unpaid care work, especially for poor women, should be reduced, for example through technology and efficiency measures. It does not imply that the amount of care provided is reduced; it is vital that the level and quality of care provided is at least maintained.

Redistribution implies from women to men, but also better distribution between households, markets, the State and civil society – guided by the goal to tackle inequalities and ensure greater enjoyment of human rights, while protecting and prioritizing the quality of care provided.

Recognition implies that unpaid care work should be valued as a crucial social and economic good, including by measuring it and counting it as a form of work; and that those who provide unpaid care work should be supported, valued and treated as rights-holders.³⁸

3.3 Indicators

As the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network has emphasized, SDG indicators have a dual purpose: as a management tool to help countries develop implementation and monitoring strategies, and as a tool to measure progress and ensure accountability.³⁹ There are several **indicators** that could be effective in these regards for unpaid care. Many could be included as indicators under the specific target on unpaid care work; some can be included/mainstreamed under other areas of the framework. Much of the necessary data is already collected, or could be collected under existing mechanisms.

The relevant data to measure progress on the indicators will be collected primarily by national (and sub-national) authorities, with involvement and cooperation from international agencies and civil society organizations.⁴⁰ Many indicators relevant to unpaid care work are already included among the UN Statistics Division's Minimum Set of Gender Indicators,⁴¹ and some are already routinely collected by States, for example in **household surveys**. However, there are certainly gaps in the existing data on unpaid care work and this is something that the post-2015 framework will hopefully begin to redress.

Regular time use-surveys are a necessary tool to make visible the extent of unpaid care work. The data collected can also be used to capture and analyse gender roles, explain gender disparities in work and education, and make visible the necessity of particular policy measures such as investment in energy or infrastructure.⁴² Approximately 70 countries have conducted time-use surveys, including many developing countries, but further investment is needed to conduct them regularly in every country and improve their quality and disaggregation.⁴³ As UN Women and others have argued, efforts should also be made to develop additional perception

indicators to measure social norms related to gender equality, women's empowerment and the human rights of women and girls.⁴⁴ The proposals for indicators on unpaid care work made by UN Women⁴⁵ are well-founded and feasible for all countries; most of the following are therefore derived from their proposals. Where an indicator was suggested by a party other than UN Women, this has been noted in an endnote.

Suggested indicators

Measuring women's time burdens:

Progress under these indicators can be measured by well-designed time-use surveys.

- Average weekly number of hours spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex.
- The female to male ratio of total workload (both paid and unpaid work);⁴⁶ or Average number of hours spent on paid and unpaid work combined (total work burden), by sex.⁴⁷
- Average time spent on fuel-wood collection, by sex.

Access to public services and care services

- Average time spent on water collection (including waiting time at public supply points), by sex.
- Proportion of households within 15 minutes of nearest water source.
- Proportion of children under primary school age in organized childcare.

Investments in energy and domestic technologies (these could also be integrated as indicators under Proposed Goal 7⁴⁸):

Data on these indicators are routinely collected in household surveys.

- Percentage of households with fuel-efficient stoves/using solid cooking fuels, by income and rural/urban location.
- Percentage of households with access to electricity, by urban/rural location.

3.4 Taking unpaid care work into account in other goals and targets

Unpaid care work is also relevant to many of the other areas of the post-2015 goals. Firstly, it will be a potential barrier to achieving some goals and targets. For example, women are often unable to benefit equally from poverty reduction measures, education, decent work initiatives, or social protection programmes that fail to take into account unpaid care duties. Measures to increase girls' school completion rates, for example, will be less successful if they ignore girls' time-consuming responsibilities at home: among 13- to 24-year-olds in Guatemala, 33 percent of girls said household chores was the main reason for not being enrolled in school.⁴⁹

Secondly, targets under other goals may impact positively or negatively on the amount, intensity and distribution of unpaid care work. For example, targets on increasing access to quality health and education services and improving energy and water infrastructure will reduce time spent on unpaid care and so are likely to be particularly

important in promoting gender equality. In contrast, ill-designed measures towards otherwise desirable goals could inadvertently increase women's work. For example: public works programmes which fail to provide on-site childcare can exclude women or increase women's time poverty⁵⁰; measures to ensure registration of all newborn children increase women's work if they rely on families bringing infants to central registration centres far from the rural areas where many of the poorest people live.⁵¹

Below we include suggestions for possible indicators/benchmarks under other goals and targets that could have positive effects on reducing and redistributing women's unpaid care work.⁵² The Goals included below are those proposed in the final outcome document of the Open Working Group.⁵³ Even where not explicitly specified, progress under all these targets should be measured and disaggregated by sex, rural/urban location and income level.

Poverty (Goal 1)

- Percentage of population covered by comprehensive social protection floor⁵⁴

Health (Goal 3)

- Percentage of population within x distance of an affordable healthcare service provider
- Ratio of health professionals to population⁵⁵
- Numbers of people providing full-time unpaid care for a sick person in the home or community (disaggregated by income level and urban/rural location)
- Unmet need for family planning

Education (Goal 4)

- Enrolment in technical and vocational education and training programmes as a percentage of the total enrolment in upper secondary education, by sex
- Enrolment/completion rates in primary and secondary schools, by sex, income level and rural/urban location⁵⁶

Water and Sanitation (Goal 6)

- Percentage of population using an improved drinking water source with a total collection roundtrip time of 30 minutes or less, including waiting time⁵⁷

Employment and decent work (Goal 8)

- Gender wage gap
- Unemployment rate, by sex and age
- Informal employment as a share of non-agricultural employment, by sex
- Proportion of low pay workers, by sex and age.

Financing for development/means of implementation (Goal 17)

- Share of tax and budget laws and policies subject to periodic, participatory gender equality analyses, and public expenditure tracking, especially as they impact poor women
- Progressivity of tax regime⁵⁸

4. Achieving change post-2015 and beyond

In order to make meaningful progress towards the target and under the indicators listed above, concerted policy and legislative efforts will be necessary from States and development partners. Obviously, each country has its own challenges and context, so there are a variety of possible approaches – but the urgency of action is universal. The following is a summary of some of the most important and effective approaches, taken from experience across different contexts - developed/developing and North/South. These can be considered part of the ‘means of implementation’ for the Sustainable Development Goals, but are also necessary beyond the confines of the post-2015 process and regardless of the final goals and targets.

4.1 Investment in technology and infrastructure

Care is essential to every household, community and society; but in many cases it can be performed in less time and with less drudgery through better support. This frees up women’s time and boosts their opportunities, capabilities and rights enjoyment; and also improves the quality of care that is provided, benefitting all members of the household and of society.

- a) Investment in and dissemination of affordable domestic technologies such as grain grinders and fuel-efficient stoves could have a major impact on freeing women’s time. *A study in the DRC showed that women with traditional stoves worked as much as 52 hours per week more than would be necessary with fuel-efficient stoves.*⁵⁹
- b) Investment in infrastructure (piped water, wells, energy networks, roads), especially in disadvantaged areas. *In rural South Africa, investments in electricity networks raised women’s employment by almost 10 percentage points in five years, by freeing up time from domestic work; while in rural Guatemala and Pakistan, the expansion of rural road networks has had a strong impact on female mobility and schooling*⁶⁰. *Also in South Africa, women who must fetch water and fuel spend one-quarter less time in paid employment than those women who do not*⁶¹.

4.2 Public services and care services

Public services: affordable, accessible and high-quality public services – including **health and education** - play a major role in supporting unpaid care work and reducing the time and drudgery it entails. The investment of greater resources in these sectors, in particular in disadvantaged areas, would have a major positive impact. For example, investment in more hospital beds, trained health professionals and palliative care facilities can prevent care for the sick or dying simply being shifted onto households at their own expense. Measures to make existing public services more sensitive to unpaid care can also be taken, for example: free school meal programmes; extended school day programmes; or household/community care capacity assessments to guide hospital discharge decisions.

Care services: high-quality **child care and elder care** should be accessible and affordable for all, in order to ease the workload of families. In most contexts, this will

entail a mixture of State provision with State subsidization and regulation of care provided by other actors (e.g. community organisations, private sector). World Bank research shows that access to subsidized child and elderly care is associated with increases in the number of hours of paid work women are able to do. In developing countries, it also boosts participation of female workers in formal employment. In contrast, lack of childcare was shown to push mothers from formal into informal employment in Botswana, Guatemala, Mexico and Vietnam.⁶²

*In 2007 when the Government of Mexico established a childcare programme for women workers, 72 percent of the women beneficiaries did not work due to lack of childcare. As a result of the childcare provided, the percentage of unemployed women beneficiaries decreased by 40 percent, and their incomes increased by 35 percent.*⁶³

*In Kenya reducing the price of childcare significantly increases mothers' wage employment and older girls' schooling.*⁶⁴

4.3 Changing social norms

Entrenched social norms and discriminatory gender stereotypes – that label men as breadwinners and women as carers and nurturers whose place is in the home - are at the root of women's disproportionate burden of unpaid care work. Actively tackling these social norms is therefore key to redistribution of care work within households and society.⁶⁵

- a) Education of women, girls, men and boys to recognize the value of care work, and tackle gender stereotypes – including through school curricula.
- b) Encouraging men and boys to provide care, including by working with faith and other traditional leaders.

*The Africare 'male empowerment' project in Zimbabwe aimed to break traditional barriers that prevented men from caring for people living with HIV/AIDS. It focused on expanding traditional notions of masculinity to include caring and supportive behaviour, through enlisting traditional leaders and also providing medical supplies.*⁶⁶

- c) Incentives/legislation to encourage employers to offer flexible work time and adequate family leave for men and women. Ultimately the goal would be to work towards a right to paid parental leave for all women and men, and incentivizing the more equal sharing of childcare through these policies, as in Iceland for example.⁶⁷ These measures are certainly immediately feasible in developed countries, and could be an important way for those countries to make progress towards the target.

4.4 Representation

Reducing the exclusion of unpaid carers from public life is a critical challenge. To this end, it is necessary to:

a) Tackle the practical constraints to the participation of unpaid caregivers (particularly those living in poverty) in community, local and national decision-making: for example by providing childcare and transport.⁶⁸

b) Build unpaid care workers' capacity and agency to participate in decision-making and policy-making – particularly with regards to land, natural resources, water, energy, social protection and decent work.

In the governance structure of Colombia's cash transfer programme Familias en Acción/Juntos, women are elected as community facilitators (madres líderes or presidentas) to serve as links between the programme and beneficiaries, giving women an opportunity to participate and providing a gender-safe environment for women beneficiaries.⁶⁹

In Nigeria, women's groups are mobilising to call for the implementation of the integrated early childhood development policy that would provide public childcare services for children from 0-5 years old across the country.⁷⁰

c) Challenge the social norms that reinforce the belief of women carers and others that they do not have a valid role in formal politics.

The Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) launched its Women, Work and Water Campaign in Gujarat, India in 1995. The campaign included awareness-raising, training, and the establishment of local water users' groups (with a majority of women) for the management of community water sources. Initially greeted with scepticism by many women and hostility from many men for intruding on 'male territory', after ten years the campaign involved 30,000 women across 500 villages. Women have demonstrated their ability to occupy 'public' space and have changed men's perceptions of women's role.⁷¹

4.5 Using a care lens across all areas of public policy

Many areas of public policy impact on unpaid care work, and therefore it is essential that these are not inadvertently undermining efforts in the areas above. To this end, governments should use a care lens in all relevant areas of policy and legislation – a few of which are outlined below. As always, the exact solutions vary according to national context but these considerations are relevant to all countries.

Fiscal and economic policies are thought by many policy-makers to be disconnected from unpaid care work, but in fact they are deeply relevant. Unpaid care is a vital contribution to the economy; if unpaid care work were instead to be financed by the public purse, it alone would represent over 3000 percent of the personal tax paid by all earners in India.⁷²

There is a misplaced assumption that the supply of unpaid care work is infinite, elastic and cost-free; it is none of these. Economic policy measures such as budget cuts or privatisation of public services actively increase and intensify the work of women living

in poverty, as they have no choice but to step in to replace the services that were cut or they can no longer afford.⁷³ This can have severe hidden costs, in terms of increased gender and income inequality, which in turn impacts negatively on social cohesion and economic prosperity. Similarly, tax policies often implicitly reinforce gender stereotypes about care, disincentivize women's work, and place a disproportionate tax burden on women who perform unpaid care work (for example through over-reliance on consumption taxes and VAT).⁷⁴ A care lens can lead to better, more realistic, policy-making, because it reveals the hidden costs and knock-on effects of certain policies.

Social protection policies should ensure that all people (including those not in work or in the informal sector) have access to comprehensive social protection, recognising that women should not be penalised as a result of interrupted work histories due to care responsibilities. Policy-makers should take care that social protection programmes are not based on and do not entrench stereotypical assumptions about women's caring role, or increase their unpaid care work by imposing actions that families (normally mothers) must perform in return for benefits.⁷⁵

Decent work and employment legislation is another crucial area in which unpaid care work must be taken into account. Priorities should include: ensuring decent work is accessible to all (and decreasing the share of the workforce in informal, unprotected, unregulated employment); recognising unpaid care as work, to be counted and measured appropriately (for example in labour statistics and national accounts)⁷⁶; implementing women's right to paid maternity leave and to request flexible working arrangements; ensuring that women are not concentrated in or pushed into the informal sector because of unpaid care responsibilities.

5. Conclusion

Ultimately, the aim for 2015, 2030 and beyond is to create societies in which unpaid care work is recognised and valued as a crucial social and economic good. In such a society unpaid care work would be shared more equally between women and men; the State would have responsibility for ensuring high-quality care is accessible to all, including the poorest people in society; sufficient investment would be made in supporting unpaid care and easing its time burden through services, infrastructure and domestic technology; and people who perform unpaid care work would have greater choices, opportunities, and voice to participate in politics, the workplace, social and cultural life.

The inclusion of a target on unpaid care work in the post-2015 agenda would represent an important symbolic and practical step towards this aim, with widely-shared benefits. Progress towards recognising, reducing and redistributing women's unpaid care work should improve the well-being of care-givers and care-receivers, as well as having a positive impact on gender equality, sustainable development, poverty reduction, and economic growth.

Unpaid care in the work of GADN members and associates

ActionAid's unpaid care work programme is currently underway in 10 countries across Asia and Africa including India, Nigeria, Uganda, Nepal and Bangladesh.⁷⁷

Oxfam's Rapid Care Analysis has been carried out in 20 programmes across 11 countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America, Middle East and the UK, leading to advocacy proposals for increased water and fuel infrastructure, communications to change norms as well as health, childcare and social services.⁷⁸

VSO have been working for many years to improve the recognition of unpaid volunteers in the community and increase the support and resources they receive. In particular, they have focused on home- and community-based carers who provide healthcare for people living with HIV/AIDS.⁷⁹

The Institute for Development Studies is conducting a three-year project examining why unpaid care work is given little attention in development policy and programming⁸⁰, including an analysis of social protection and early childhood development programmes across many countries and how they take account of unpaid care work.⁸¹ Their country study on Nepal shows that a grassroots movement of 41,000 rural women is organizing to demanding childcare services and specific support to women's unpaid care work through social security provisions.⁸²

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights submitted a report to the General Assembly in October 2013 presenting the unequal distribution of unpaid care work as a major human rights issue, highlighting its impact on poverty, gender inequality and women's rights to work, education and political participation, among others.⁸³ The report was developed after significant consultation with and input from GADN members.

¹ See: Commission on the Status of Women, 2014 (58th session), *Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls: agreed conclusions*, E/CN.6/2014/L.7 – in particular point A. (gg); Sepúlveda Carmona, M., 2013, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights: unpaid care work, poverty and women's human rights*, UN Doc A/68/293; UN Women, 2013, *A Transformative Stand-Alone Goal on Achieving Gender Equality, Women's Rights and Women's Empowerment: Imperatives and Key Components*; UN Women and ECLAC, 2013, *Report of the Expert Group Meeting on Structural and Policy Constraints in Achieving the MDGs for Women and Girls*, available at <http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/CSW/58/CSW58-2013-EGM-Report-en.pdf>. Various States have also included a target on unpaid care work in their proposals for the post-2015 agenda. In the 'zero draft' proposed goals and targets issued following the 11th session of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, a target on unpaid care work was included (point 5.6. <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/focussdgs.html>)

² See endnote 1. For States, also see e.g. the 'Encyclopedia Groupinica: A Compilation of Goals and Targets Suggestions from OWG-10. Available at

<http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/3698EncyclopediaGroupinica.pdf>

³ The calculations vary from 15-63% depending on country and method. See for example: Budlender, D., 2010, 'What Do Time Use Studies Tell us about Unpaid Care Work? Evidence from Seven Countries', in *Time Use Studies and Unpaid Care Work*, ed. Budlender, UNRISD; Hoenig S. A. and Page, A.R.E, 2012, *Counting on Care Work in Australia*, Report prepared by AECgroup Limited for economic Security4women, Australia; Charmes, J. and J. Unni (2004), "Measurement of work", in G. Standing and M. Chen eds., *Reconceptualising Work*, International Labour Organization.

⁴ See Razavi, S., 2007, *The Political and Social Economy of Care in a Development Context: Conceptual Issues, Research Questions and Policy Options*, UNRISD

⁵ For further information on the importance of community volunteers to the post-2015 agenda, see VSO, 2014, *Volunteerism and the Post-2015 Agenda*, VSO International. Available at

http://www.vsointernational.org/Images/Volunteerism-and-the-post-2015-agenda_tcm76-41498.pdf

⁶ See for example Budlender, D., 2010, *Time Use Studies and Unpaid Care Work*, New York, Routledge; ActionAid, 2012, *Making Care Visible: women's unpaid care work in Nepal, Nigeria, Uganda and Kenya*. Available at www.actionaid.org/unpaidcarework.

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¹⁰ See Razavi, 2007, op cit.

¹¹ See Williams, F., 2014, 'Making Connections across the Transnational Political Economy of Care' in B. Anderson and I. Shutes (eds.) *Care and Migrant Labour: Theory, Policy and Politics*, Palgrave Macmillan

¹² Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995. Available at

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/BDPfA%20E.pdf>. See in particular Strategic Objectives A4, F6 and H3.

¹³ See Sepúlveda Carmona, M., 2013, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights: unpaid care work, poverty and women's human rights*, UN Doc A/68/293;

¹⁴ See e.g. Budlender, D., 2008, 'The Statistical Evidence on Care and Non-Care Work Across Six Countries', UNRISD (infographics based on these statistics available at <http://growsellthrive.org/our-work/care>) and ActionAid, 2012, op. cit.

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¹⁷ ILO, 2009, *Give Girls a Chance – Tackling Child Labour, a Key to the Future*. Available at <http://www.ilo.org/ipecinfor/product/viewProduct.do?productId=10290>

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¹⁹ Akintola, A., 2008, 'Towards equal sharing of care responsibilities: Learning from Africa', paper prepared for UNDAW Expert Meeting

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²⁵ See e.g. Kabeer, N. and L. Natali, 2013, *Gender Equality and Economic Growth: Is there a win-win?* IDS Working Paper 2013: 417

²⁶ See World Bank, 2012, *op cit.*; UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda, 2012,

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²⁷ ILO, 2009, *op cit.*

²⁸ IMF, 2013, *Women Work and the Economy: Macroeconomic Gains from Gender Equity*

²⁹ Varma, S., 2014, '16 crore jobless women form India's 'Great Invisible Force', *Times of India*, 3 July 2014. <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/16-crore-jobless-women-form-Indias-Great-Invisible-Force/articleshow/37669859.cms>

³⁰ OECD, 2008, *Gender and Sustainable Development: Maximising the Economic, Social and Environmental Role of Women*, 18-19

³¹ See Antonopoulos, R., A. Zacharias and T. Masterson, 2012, *Uncovering the Hidden Poor: The Importance of Time Deficits*, Levy Economics Institute; Gammage, S., 2010, 'Time Pressed and Time Poor: Unpaid Household Work in Guatemala', *Feminist Economics* 16:3 79-112

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³³ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), 2010, *Gender Dimensions of Agricultural and Rural Employment: differentiated pathways out of poverty*, 31

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³⁵ <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/focussdgs.html>

³⁶ <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/focussdgs.html>

³⁷ <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/4044zerodraft.pdf>

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⁴⁴ UN Women, 2014, *Targets and indicators for Post-2015 stand-alone goal and mainstreaming*, May 2014

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⁴⁶ Harper, C., K. Nowacka, H. Adler, G. Ferrant, 2014, *Measuring women's empowerment and social transformation in the post-2015 agenda*, OECD Development Centre and Overseas Development Institute

⁴⁷ See UNSDSN 2014, op cit. p.11. This is already included among the UN Statistics Division's Minimum Set of Gender Indicators.

⁴⁸ 'Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all': Final Outcome Document of the Open Working Group 21.7.14. <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/focussdgs.html>

⁴⁹ World Bank, 2012, op cit.

⁵⁰ FAO and Asian Development Bank, 2013, *Gender Equality and Food Security: Women's Empowerment as a Tool Against Hunger*, 56-57

⁵¹ See UNICEF, 2013, *Every Child's Birth Right: Inequities and trends in birth registration*, 37

⁵² If these are not included under these targets they may need to be included under the gender goal.

⁵³ Final Outcome Document of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals 21.7.14. <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/focussdgs.html>

⁵⁴ See for example Women's Major Group 2014 (ibid), and UNSDSN 2014, op cit.p.9

⁵⁵ See UNSDSN 2014, op cit p.12

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⁵⁹ Bourque and Kega-Wa-Kega, 2011, op cit.

⁶⁰ World Bank 2012, op cit. Ch. 4

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⁷² Budlender, D., 2010, *Time Use Studies and Unpaid Care Work*, UNRISD

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⁷⁶ The 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians in 2013 adopted a resolution to expand the definition of work to include unpaid care work or 'own-use production work'. See http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/normativeinstrument/wcms_230304.pdf

⁷⁷ ActionAid, 2012, op cit.; IDS, 2014, *Interactions: Empowerment of Women and Girls – unpaid care work*. <http://interactions.eldis.org/unpaid-care-work>

⁷⁸ <http://growsellthrive.org/our-work/care>, www.oxfam.org.uk/care

⁷⁹ See <http://www.vsointernational.org/what-we-do/health.asp> and <http://www.vsointernational.org/what-we-do/advocacy/Post-2015.asp#0>

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We are grateful for comments from Rachel Moussie (ActionAid International), Daphne Jayasinghe (ActionAid UK), Thalia Kidder (Oxfam GB), and Rachael Stokes (VSO International).

The Gender & Development Network (GADN) brings together expert NGOs, consultants, academics and individuals committed to working on gender, development and women's rights issues. Our vision is of a world where social justice and gender equality prevail and where all women and girls are able to realise their rights free from discrimination. Our goal is to ensure that international development policy and practice promotes gender equality and women's and girls' rights. Our role is to support our members by sharing information and expertise, to undertake and disseminate research, and to provide expert advice and comment on government policies and projects.

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