

Chiara Capraro and  
Francesca Rhodes,  
GADN Advisory  
Group

# Advancing feminist alternatives in the context of neoliberalism

Reflections from advocating on unpaid care and  
domestic work

**Breaking down the gender division in primary responsibility for unpaid care and domestic work is key to achieving a feminist alternative world, because it both challenges gendered roles in society and disrupts a neoliberal model of development based on individualism and commodification of all aspects of life. As other authors in this series have written, a feminist alternative society would place more value on both wellbeing and work that is predominantly carried out by women. We argue that unpaid care work sits at the intersection of these two criteria and is thus crucial to any vision of a feminist development paradigm.**

## Introduction

Prior to the development of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), discussion of unpaid care and domestic work as a development issue was mainly confined to feminist spaces and the women's movement, but in recent years it has risen within mainstream global development debate and discourse. The World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the global consulting firm McKinsey have all championed addressing women's unequal responsibility for unpaid care work. In 2015, UN member states agreed to include a target on the issue in the SDGs.<sup>i</sup> The wording and planned measurement of this target are far from perfect, but its inclusion in the SDGs is indisputably progress for recognising the importance of unpaid care work.<sup>ii</sup> Thus, while unpaid care and domestic work has made it onto the agenda, particularly around discussions on women's economic empowerment, we now find ourselves confronted with the particular ways in which neoliberal actors and discourse have become interested in and are shaping that very concept. As feminists seeking to move towards alternative visions of society, we believe it is important to examine what

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<sup>i</sup> Target 5.4 reads, "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." See Sustainable Development Goal 5. 2015. *Sustainable development knowledge platform*. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg5>

<sup>ii</sup> Not only does the target carry the disclaimer "as nationally appropriate," which reinforces the notion that responsibility for unpaid care and domestic work is culturally defined, but it is also supported by a weak indicator that only disaggregates time spent by sex, age and location rather than actual provision of services.

happens when disruptive concepts enter the mainstream—and our own roles in that process. In particular we are faced with the dilemma of how to preserve the feminist integrity and disruptive potential of unpaid care and domestic work in a context of fundamentalist<sup>iii</sup> neoliberal beliefs about the economy and economic policymaking. Neoliberalism is also notable for its ability to change and adapt when challenged, often deepening its reach into new areas of society.

This paper is informed by interviews we conducted in September 2016 with ten feminists who, like us, have worked on unpaid care and domestic work across a variety of professional roles, time periods and institutions, including universities, international NGOs, civil society organisations and multilateral organisations. Their insight and collective experience provided us a huge wealth of knowledge that we have used to analyse how far we have come in our thinking on economic alternatives and unpaid care work. Using this research as a jumping-off point, we also attempt to sketch a way forward for our advocacy now that the issue we care about is finally part of a mainstream agenda. In conversation with our interviewees, we have reflected on why the issue of unpaid care and domestic work has risen so fast up the development agenda in the past three years. In doing so we have also considered how influential and widespread this change has been, as many of our interviewees commented that the mainstream discourse on women and the economy has not shifted significantly over decades, the focus remaining on gender equality as “smart economics” and creating market opportunities for individual women and girls.

In this paper, we first discuss the disruptive potential of unpaid care and domestic work for feminist alternatives, and then examine how the concept has been taken up and adapted in a neoliberal context. We then look at strategies for continuing to advocate for feminist alternatives through the lens of this issue.

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<sup>iii</sup> We understand neoliberal and free market propositions as a form of fundamentalism since, as Ha-Joon Chang among others has shown, rather than being considered one doctrine amongst many in economic science, they assume a character of truth and irrefutability. Despite overwhelming evidence of the profound human rights violations caused by free market policies over the course of decades, such policies continue to be promoted by powerful actors on a global scale. Recently the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, in his report on fundamentalisms, took a broad view of the term to include free market ideology as a form of fundamentalism. He argues for a more flexible approach to understanding fundamentalism as “any movements—not simply religious ones—that advocate strict and literal adherence to a set of basic beliefs or principles.” In the report he explores the rights implications of the belief that market fundamentalism is “infallible” and that “the health of the economy should be paramount and prioritized over other societal interests.” See Chang, H. 2014. *Economics: the user’s guide*. London: Penguin, London; UN Human Rights Council. 2016. *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, A/HRC/32/36*. Geneva: UN, 8-11.

### Box 1: A note on definitions

In this paper, we use *unpaid care and domestic work* in line with UN Women's definition, which includes the production of goods for self-consumption (e.g. collecting water and firewood) and the production of services for self-consumption, such as cooking, cleaning and caring for others (e.g. bathing a child or feeding an ill person).<sup>1</sup> In all countries, women are typically responsible for a higher proportion of unpaid care and domestic work than are men, a trend that tends to persist where women spend the same amount of time as men in the labour market.<sup>2</sup>

Gendered divisions in responsibility for this type of work are core to the patriarchal division of society, and informed by the hierarchy of value placed on the traditionally masculine public sphere over the feminine private sphere.<sup>3</sup> Under capitalist patriarchy, work that produces goods or services and is monetarily rewarded is valued and counted as part of the economy, whilst work that is carried out unpaid for the purpose of sustaining the wellbeing of ourselves and others is not. The term *social reproduction*, referring to all forms of labour that produce and reproduce the labour force, such as giving birth and taking care of future workers, has also historically been used by feminists in their analysis of the economy, although as we discuss below this terminology is used much less in the development sector. Another term, which is gaining popularity—used for example in the recent UN High-Level Panel on women's economic empowerment—is *care economy*.<sup>4</sup> While this term suggests that issues of unpaid care and domestic work are systemic and therefore need to be addressed holistically, it seems to imply that they are also separate from the “real” economy. As we will discuss, this is exactly the way in which neoliberal actors understand unpaid care and domestic work.

We believe this analysis is critical since choice of words, framings and ultimately policies shaped by such actors “make worlds”, as Cornwall and Brock put it; therefore “struggles over meaning are not just about semantics: they gain a very real material dimension.”<sup>5</sup>

## The disruptive potential of unpaid care work

Unpaid care and domestic work is a structural issue pertinent to how economies and societies are organised, as well as speaking to the lived routines of women and men. Unpaid care and domestic work is at the core of a feminist analysis of the economy: by understanding the economy as a gendered construct we can discern what types of activities are deemed productive and count in economic terms and which others go unrecognised and undervalued. Feminist economists have shown how ignoring unpaid care and domestic work and considering them as separate from conventionally productive activities leads to a series of fallacies in economic policy making, most

notably privileging objectives of deficit reduction and growth over broader goals of social well-being.<sup>6</sup>

Feminist economists advocate a move from focusing “simply on the market economy with growth and accumulation as its primary goals” to centring economic policy on the “provisioning of human needs and human well-being.”<sup>7</sup> As Marilyn Waring first argued, counting unpaid care and domestic work has the potential to disrupt the system based on market fundamentalism and to open the door to new ways of organising the economy and ultimately, life.<sup>8</sup> Diane Elson coined the now-classic “three Rs” for addressing women’s disproportionate burden of unpaid care and domestic work: recognising, reducing and redistributing.<sup>9</sup> As we will explore, however, each of these propositions can be read differently—and can be neutralised by the neoliberal economic narrative to further its market fundamentalism goals.

To recognise unpaid care and domestic work, feminist economists are not only advocating for counting it as part of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), but for a different economic system based on valuing unpaid care and domestic work and those who do such activities. Reduction does not imply lower amounts of unpaid care or domestic work but a reduction in its drudgery, such as the 40 billion hours women and girls in Africa spend each year walking to collect water.<sup>10</sup> Finally, when it comes to redistribution, this means a shift not just from women to men within the household—with changes to the social security system and the terms and conditions of male paid employment, supported by changes in the way boys are educated and norms of masculinity are formed—but also from the household to the state in the form of universal, well-funded, high quality care services and infrastructure primarily.<sup>11</sup>

## **Virus and antibodies: how unpaid care and domestic work are tamed by neoliberal fundamentalism**

In her 2012 article *The Hegemony Cracked: The Power Guide to Getting Care onto the Development Agenda*, Rosalind Eyben argued that feminist advocates needed to “crack” the hegemony and disrupt the current (and unquestioned) order by raising women’s unpaid care and domestic work as a concept with the potential to foment new ways of thinking about how our economies and, ultimately, the world are organised.<sup>12</sup> Breaking down the patriarchal subordination of care has profound implications for both women’s work and the accepted purpose of the economy in supporting human wellbeing. However, gender inequalities in unpaid care and domestic work have increasingly been framed in development discourse as a market imperfection, a barrier to the efficient functioning of the labour force—and to women fairly benefitting from the economy through paid labour.<sup>13</sup>

In particular, unpaid care and domestic work has found traction in the field of women's economic empowerment. "Smart economics" arguments based on the need to increase women's labour force participation rates to drive economic growth have been criticised by feminist economists for failing to take into account the quality of the economic opportunities afforded to women, and the extent to which they provide empowerment through an increase in access to resources, decision-making and agency.<sup>14</sup> Unpaid care work responsibilities have largely been over-simplified and depoliticised as a barrier to increasing paid work participation. This has served to exclude the value of care to the economy, and fails to break down the neoliberal distinction between paid and unpaid work. It has also masked the heterogeneity of the provision and receipt of care, as well as inequalities based on class, race, migration status, caste and other factors. This, while isolating unpaid care and domestic work from a wider feminist analysis of the economy has been used as a strategy to gain traction with decision-makers, it also risks reducing its potential to threaten the market fundamentalist discourse.

As one of our respondents said, unpaid care and domestic work can be—and has been—conceptualised in a way that crowds out its disruptive potential within macroeconomic policy. As another respondent (a feminist economist) noted, the narrative around unpaid care and domestic work that has gained currency with neoliberal actors is framed in typically Northern and middle-class terms by referencing the particular experiences of women in full-time paid employment in industrialised countries, who are often primarily concerned with childcare and routine domestic work. She noted how unpaid care and domestic work were nowhere on the agenda at the time of Structural Adjustment Programmes in the Global South in the 1980s. Austerity, precarious employment and sluggish economic growth have brought the crisis of unpaid care and domestic work into sharp relief in the Global North, shaping how the issue has been raised globally and in development. Analysing strategies on economic development and gender across development institutions and donors also shows how the issue of unpaid care and domestic work is addressed in relation to women's economic empowerment, but is still invisible in strategies for economic development.<sup>15</sup>

Another respondent who works with women informal workers noted how operating a division between paid and unpaid work is typical of a middle-class setting. The women with whom she works—street vendors, domestic workers and women working in waste management—do not have a choice but to engage in paid work. Therefore, even if childcare is not available and they are the only one doing domestic chores, they will either find less secure employment where they can do some work with their children nearby, such as home-based work, or they will leave them unattended at home and worry about them. This has a direct impact on how much money they earn, but unlike their middle-class counterparts, for women in poverty this means earning even less due to childcare. Given the low wages they earn, redistribution of unpaid care and domestic work can only happen through living wages and social protection measures.

Unpaid care and domestic work are not a barrier to these women's paid employment; rather, the pitiful wages they earn are a barrier to a dignified life.

## Advocating for space in the existing agenda: feminist arguments and neoliberal responses

As feminist economists have shown, economic policy is overwhelmingly portrayed as technocratic and devoid of social consequences. Shaking this premise is critical to advancing alternatives—and the first step is to deconstruct the deeply gendered ways in which our social and economic institutions are shaped.<sup>16</sup>

### Unpaid care and domestic work vis-à-vis women's paid work

A feminist analysis of work argues that both productive and reproductive work are part of the economy and should be valued accordingly, although in a capitalist patriarchal system, productive work is prioritised. One important reflection from our respondents who, like us, work or have worked in or with INGOs, is that in order to make a case for unpaid care and domestic work to be taken seriously, they believed that feminist theory needed to be simplified. For example, one of our respondents reflected on how she would have preferred to use the term “social reproduction” but used the term “unpaid care work” instead as social reproduction was deemed too political in her organisation. Another respondent noted how issues of social reproduction need to be made applicable to programmes and policy development in a practical manner, and one strategy for doing this is to conceptualise them in relation to productive, market based work.

Our respondents have reflected, however, that whilst a focus on unpaid care and domestic work as a barrier to paid work is often a successful strategy for getting the issue onto the agenda, isolating unpaid care from the rest of women's work, and from wider gender inequality, weakens the overall feminist political economy analysis. The idea that unpaid care and domestic work is a barrier to women's economic empowerment has been embraced by mainstream actors, including INGOs eager to find solutions for increasing women's labour market participation, in keeping with the “smart economics” approach of neoliberal institutions. Women's rights advocates have criticised these narratives for failing to take into account the quality of jobs available to women, or addressing their structural disadvantage in economic models premised on cheap labour.

## Investing in care

Feminist advocates argue that unpaid care and domestic work must be counted as part of the economy. This does not mean attaching a monetary value to unpaid care and domestic work, but rather reframing economic policy towards acknowledging unpaid care and domestic work as critical activities. Such an argument has disruptive potential with its demand for a new way of understanding and measuring economic activity that could promote wellbeing that is sustainable, both socially and environmentally.

However, this argument has been taken up and distorted by the fundamentalist discourse by counting unpaid care and domestic work in monetary terms and in potential contribution to GDP, rather than in terms of time use and the value of care in enabling society to function. This means assessing unpaid care and domestic work in ways that support what is already valued by the neoliberal economy—paid work, profit and GDP—rather than fundamentally shifting values in the economy towards the care and wellbeing of people. The inadequacy of GDP as a measure of social and economic progress was discussed at length in a report commissioned by the French government as far back as 2008–9, spearheaded by Joseph Stiglitz and Amartya Sen.<sup>17</sup> That report recognised the many ways in which current economic indices obscure the contributions of women and the centrality of care.

As a result, the neoliberal quest for profit has been applied to care services, reducing public spending and furthering privatization as well as squeezing wages and deteriorating working conditions by prioritising efficiency and higher returns. Paid care work is undervalued due to its gendered nature, as it is seen as a “natural” extension of women’s role in the home. As Diane Perrons explains, since caring is a time-consuming activity, its rationalisation and efficiency can only be achieved by reducing the wages and worsening the working conditions of carers. In the UK those providing care on the market, overwhelmingly women, earn on average £8000 less per year than the average UK salary.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, in those places where childcare is provided through public programmes, it has the benefit of reducing the care hours of mothers with small children, enabling them to spend more time on paid work if they choose—something that appeals to the neoliberal feminist agenda, concerned with promoting change for women in individualistic terms without dismantling oppressive structure of capitalism and patriarchy.<sup>19</sup> In particular, the “win-win” argument that supporting women as economic actors is a means of supporting mothers and children has proven successful, connected to the barrier argument. However, increased attention to the issue has not translated into increased financing for childcare services or to the quality of care jobs. Tellingly, other forms of care, such as care for the elderly and the ill, where the labour market connection is not as obvious, have not received as much attention.

Feminists must reiterate calls for investment in care by arguing that unpaid care and domestic work is necessary to produce and reproduce the workforce of today and

tomorrow; therefore it underpins and subsidises the market economy. This counteracts the conventional economist's view, which deems only the money spent towards physical infrastructure such as roads and bridges to be investment, while counting money spent on care as consumption. Rather than focusing on the potential profits to be made in providing care and domestic work services, the feminist argument for investment shows the potential gains in wellbeing and gender equality that creating well-paid, secure jobs in the care and domestic work sector would produce, which benefit paid carers as well as those who use the services for their own needs or to redistribute their responsibilities. For example, a recent study shows that investing 2 per cent of GDP in care industries in the UK would generate up to 1.5 million jobs, compared to 750,000 jobs created with equivalent investment in the construction sector.<sup>20</sup> Investing in care industries would partly pay for itself through higher tax receipts; other funds could be generated through policy choices such as redirecting military spending as well as curbing tax dodging.<sup>21</sup>

## Social norms and redistribution

A key demand from feminists has been the redistribution of unpaid care and domestic work. Feminist economists argue that the social construction of unpaid care and domestic work as “women's work” extends beyond the household to the wider economy, with the result that the impacts of economic policy on the provision of unpaid care and domestic work is invisible; however, this knowledge is not taken into account by those neoliberal actors who have taken up the agenda. Their understanding of redistribution places unpaid care and domestic work back into the private sphere of the heteronormative household, in the realm of “social norms,” where it is for women and men to share the load more fairly between them. As one respondent noted, during the process to replace the MDGs at their expiry date in 2015, unpaid care and domestic work was swiftly embraced by those working to promote new models of caring masculinities, often without addressing the wider structural issues that shape women's and men's work and respective positions in the labour market, nor how wider economic policy affects the redistribution of unpaid care and domestic work.

As Kate Bedford notes, writing about World Bank programmes in Argentina during the debt crisis, in the context of cuts to—or the absence of—public services, infrastructure and social protection, a call to redistribute unpaid care work within the family equals shifting care from poor women to poor men.<sup>22</sup> Changing one's behaviour and being flexible to fit the needs of the market is the ultimate mantra of market fundamentalism. Navigating the conundrum of social norms is no easy task. As Bedford suggests, citing Gayatri Spivak, feminist advocates have to embrace the discomfort to “engage in a persistent critique of what one cannot *not* want”—in this case, the fact that fathers and other male family members should spend more time cleaning and caring for their loved ones.<sup>23</sup> In the case of Argentina, Bedford analysed how calls for family cohesion to weather the economic crisis, in the shape of mutually empowering relationships between men and women rather than increased public services, were promoted



through World Bank-funded programmes and embraced and shaped by the powerful Catholic Church to promote its vision for the family. The terrain of economic crisis as a crisis of unpaid care and domestic work in heterosexual households represents fertile ground for different kinds of fundamentalism, notably neoliberal and religious, as Bugra illustrates in the context of Turkey.<sup>24</sup>

This neoliberal framing, when it makes use of visions of the family and balanced relationships, is difficult to resist—and this has clear consequences that see the disruptive potential of unpaid care and domestic work all but negated. As we have seen, advocates use a series of powerful arguments to connect unpaid care and domestic work to the market economy and improving conditions for women, including increasing women’s labour force participation. However, such arguments, interacting with the prevalent mainstream discourse result in problematic consequences, as follows:

- Women’s right to decent work, including living wages and social protection is sidelined. Not only is the discrepancy between women’s and men’s earnings unchallenged, but the labour market shaped by neoliberal policies is left intact.
- Unpaid care and domestic work becomes an opportunity for corporate expansion and profit due to a market fundamentalist appetite for expanding profits and market reach. As one of our respondents noted, rampant privatisation of services has been a trend long before unpaid care and domestic work rose up the agenda of neoliberal institutions—and can only continue with the propagation of this logic.
- The need to change conventional fiscal policy frameworks to provide universal public care services and improve the wages and working conditions of those who care on the market is invisible in the discourse, displaced by a view of redistribution as a private matter to be worked out by individual men and women at household level. At a time when increasing inequality and instability threaten the neoliberal narrative, neoliberal actors reinvent themselves as caring by taking up gendered social norms as a concern.

## Challenging neoliberal fundamentalisms: unpaid care work as catalyst

Our collective discussions have pointed to the need to rework strategies for transformative advocacy on unpaid care and domestic work, given the changed nature of global debates. Our informants argue for reconnecting unpaid care and domestic work to structural analysis and to working collaboratively with other movements fighting market fundamentalism and struggling for transformation. This is a strategy that Eyben highlighted in 2012, encouraging feminist activists to show these movements they will not achieve their aims without addressing unpaid care and domestic work in their approach.<sup>25</sup> That there is a target on unpaid care work in the SDGs is a victory, but the deep contradictions within that framework call for more expansive approaches. As Esquivel points out in her review of Agenda 2030, the “grow first, redistribute later”

approach of the SDGs does not touch on how we might rebalance power between North and South, rich and poor, and ultimately men and women.<sup>26</sup>

Feminists interested in real transformation must begin to broach a new discussion about what our economies are *for*. Fundamentally, a feminist agenda must promote valuing care of oneself and others for its inherent value and contribution to wellbeing, disrupting the patriarchal hierarchy of value placed on what is characterised as private and public activity. In order to do this, we noted that working as a strong and united global women's movement is important, and that building capacity and understanding around a feminist critique of neoliberalism so that advocates across the movement can take forward the agenda would add to our strength. The importance of working with other movements that are challenging neoliberalism and proposing alternative economic models based on wellbeing, de-growth<sup>iv</sup> and solidarity also emerged strongly in our discussions. Reimagining the economy as a mechanism to serve the needs of people, rather than people needing to serve the needs of the economy, can therefore be used as a strategy. Feminists wanting to advance the agenda must work from a position of power and solidarity with each other, whether inside or outside development organisations, civil society and government—see Box 2.

## Box 2: Strategies for challenging market fundamentalisms

The Women's Budget Group in the UK has authored Plan F as a reimagining of the economy from a feminist perspective, and works as an ally with other actors, such as trade unions, to promote the messages.<sup>27</sup> Others are working on solidarity economies, circular economies and describing how the economy can be reoriented so that its primary aim is to support wellbeing and the realisation of human rights. Still others are working towards private care provision that is respectful of the rights of those who need care as well as those of carers, such as SEWA's childcare cooperatives in India; these types of initiatives provide a viable alternative to the corporatization of care and reposition care in the realm of wellbeing rather than subordination to women's participation in the labour market. For more examples, see the [other papers in this Feminist Development Alternatives series](#).

Feminists working within development institutions have also documented the types of "insider/outsider" strategies they have employed to advance their agendas.<sup>28</sup> Having a nuanced understanding of roles on the inside, as well as a political understanding of the opportunities with which we are presented when carrying out advocacy, is key to influencing policy or practice change and was reiterated by many of our interviewees. However we also noted that keeping mindful of the

<sup>iv</sup> De-growth is an economic, political and social theory that questions limitless growth and recognises overconsumption as the roots cause of environmental degradation and economic and social inequality. The economist Serge Latouche is one of the major figures of the de-growth movement. See Latouche, S. 2004. 'Why less should be so much more: degrowth economics', *Le monde diplomatique*, October. <http://www.jussempier.org/Resources/Economic%20Data/Resources/Degrowth%20economics,%20by%20Serge%20Latouche.pdf>

wider agenda and ultimate goal is important; otherwise we risk playing down the radical nature of our asks, leaving nowhere to go in the future. As Eyben has written, spaces dominated by the fundamentalist approach can be disrupted by naming the issue and refusing to conform to the dominant narrative.<sup>29</sup>

These strategies are increasingly important as, almost ten years on from the economic crisis, the growing recognition of inequality as an economic ill and the polarisation of popular politics in the West is also seeing cracks in the neoliberal hegemony emerging from surprising places. For example, a research paper published by the IMF in 2016 discussed the possibility that the benefits of neoliberalism had been “oversold.”<sup>30</sup> In our own organisations, there are opportunities to work on campaigns and policy work that are proposing alternatives to the current economic model. Ensuring that we exploit these cracks to advance a feminist alternative to the crisis will be key for transformation.

Cross-movement alliances can mean working outside our usual spaces. For example, feminists can support the climate justice movement to go beyond an analysis of the impacts of climate change on women’s rights to conceptualise the degradation of the environment as degradation of the quality of care that is provided. They can also work with the labour movement, in particular labour economists, to reconnect unpaid care and domestic work to the vital issues of wages, social protection and decent work, anchoring these debates in the experiences of women at the margins of the economic system—informal and precarious workers, migrant women, minority women, indigenous women—for whom issues of paid work, unpaid work and care work are more similar than different.

Another potential alliance, currently underexplored, is with the human rights movement. As one of our respondents pointed out, human rights instruments like CEDAW are not explicit about unpaid care and domestic work, and treaty bodies have not done much work on it to date.<sup>v</sup> The former UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona, dedicated her 2013 report to unpaid care as a human rights issue, thus illuminating how a disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care and domestic work impacts on women’s rights to health, work and leisure.<sup>31</sup> There seems to be ambivalence in the human rights community about taking up unpaid care and domestic work as a human rights issue for a number of reasons: first, the complex nature of unpaid care, which cuts across many human rights; second, the reluctance by traditional human rights actors to work on issues that are perceived to pertain to the private sphere; and finally, as we have seen, the fact that the issue is not explicitly mentioned in human rights treaties. In the face of growing threats to human rights from

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<sup>v</sup> It is, however, worth noting that CEDAW Article 5a on removing stereotyped roles of women and men in society is particularly relevant.

market fundamentalism, it will be critical to build and strengthen propositions for rights-based economic policymaking.

## Conclusions

In our advocacy work in the development sector, the key battle remains (as ever) pushing for increased commitments and resources dedicated to reducing and redistributing unpaid care and domestic work. This requires going beyond analysis and winning debates to seeing funds channelled towards the priorities of all women. Currently, the main spaces in which unpaid care and domestic work are addressed are those concerned with women's economic empowerment, which at the time of writing dominate the development agenda on gender equality in the UK. Even these areas still receive relatively small amounts of targeted development finance, while areas such as health, education, infrastructure and social protection receive much more.<sup>32</sup> Increasing advocacy and working more closely with allies already in these spaces could potentially leverage much more funding for interventions, as well as shift the norms around care in the minds of a new set of development professionals, perhaps with more power within their organisations than those working on gender issues.

Our discussions have pointed to the need to maintain the disruptive potential of unpaid care and domestic work and resist the fragmentation of this agenda by neoliberal fundamentalist discourse, which we can do by placing caring at the heart of our analysis as a value that transcends monetization and that is the source of life and wellbeing for all, above and beyond strict heteronormative structures. As Diane Elson told us, "We all need time free from care and time to care." We have identified two areas of focus for our efforts: working in alliance with others challenging the damaging and dehumanising nature of neoliberalism, as well as building the economic analysis within the women's movement itself. Together these strategies are key to ensuring that a strong movement emerges to take advantage of the cracks already apparent in hegemonic neoliberalism's facade, breaking through with new visions of fair economies and ensuring what replaces market fundamentalism will not replicate the patriarchal division of labour.

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<sup>1</sup> UN Women, 2015. *Progress of the world's women 2016-2016: transforming economies, realising rights*. New York: UN Women, 83. [http://progress.unwomen.org/en/2015/pdf/UNW\\_progressreport.pdf](http://progress.unwomen.org/en/2015/pdf/UNW_progressreport.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> World Bank. 2014. *Gender at work: a companion to the World Development Report on jobs*. Washington, DC: World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/17121>

<sup>3</sup> Kabeer, N. 1994. *Reversed realities: gender hierarchies in development thought*. New York: Verso.

<sup>4</sup> Klugman, J. and L. Tyson. 2016. *Leave no one behind: a call to action for gender equality and women's economic empowerment*. Report of the UN's Secretary General's High Level Panel on women's economic empowerment. New York: United Nations, 90. <http://hlp-wee.unwomen.org/-/media/hlp-wee/attachments/reports-toolkits/hlp-wee-report-2016-09-call-to-action-en.pdf?la=en>

<sup>5</sup> Eyben, R. and R. Napier-Moore. 2009. 'Choosing words with care? Shifting meanings of women's empowerment in international development', *Third world quarterly* 30.2, 285-300.

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- <sup>7</sup> Cook, S. 2014. 'Book review: New frontiers in feminist political economy', *Gender and development* 22.3, 583-587. <http://www.genderanddevelopment.org/page/new-frontiers-review>
- <sup>8</sup> Waring, M. 1988. *If women women counted: a new feminist economics*. London: Harper Collins.
- <sup>9</sup> See, for example, Elson, D. 2016. 'Recognize, reduce, and redistribute unpaid care work: how to close the gender gap', *New labor forum* 26.2, 52-61.
- <sup>10</sup> Deen, T. 2012. 'Women spend 40 billion hours collecting water', *InterPress Service News Agency*, 31 August. <http://www.ipsnews.net/2012/08/women-spend-40-billion-hours-collecting-water/>
- <sup>11</sup> Elson, D. 2016. 'Equity and development through a gender lens', speech given at 2016 Leontief Prize Ceremony, 10 March. [http://ase.tufts.edu/gdae/about\\_us/leontief/LeontiefLecture\\_Elson.pdf](http://ase.tufts.edu/gdae/about_us/leontief/LeontiefLecture_Elson.pdf)
- <sup>12</sup> Eyben, R. 2012. *The hegemony cracked: the power guide to getting care onto the development agenda*, IDS Working Paper 2012, 411.
- <sup>13</sup> For example see Klugman and Tyson 2016; Elborgh-Woytek, K., M. Newiak, K. Kochhar, S. Fabrizio, K. Kpodar, P. Wingender, B. Clements and G. Schwartz 2013. *Women, work, and the economy: macroeconomic gains from gender equity*, IMF staff discussion note. <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/sdn/2013/sdn1310.pdf>
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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.

For more information or to join the Gender & Development Network, please e-mail: [info@gadnetwork.org](mailto:info@gadnetwork.org)

### Gender & Development Network

c/o ActionAid  
33-39 Bowling Green Lane  
London EC1R 0BJ

T: 020 3122 0609  
E: [info@gadnetwork.org](mailto:info@gadnetwork.org)  
[www.gadnetwork.org](http://www.gadnetwork.org)

Registered charity no. 1140272

### Working groups

GADN brings together development practitioners, experts and academics working on thematic issues through working groups. The Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights working group is currently focused on ensuring women's rights are central to DFID's Family Planning initiative for 2012 and beyond.

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