



WOW // Work and
Opportunities
for Women

No such thing as a free lunch

**Investing in and addressing unpaid
care and domestic work: the missing
component of equitable development**

WOW Helpdesk Guidance Note No. 4

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11th October 2023

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Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Dimpy Sanganee, Laura MacLean, Heather Kindness, Beccy Davies, Benedetta Musillo and Liz Peri all at FCDO for their insightful comments, which have influenced the overall report. Thank you to Chris Hearle and Alice Allan for their quality assurance of draft and final versions of the deliverable. Gratitude is also extended to private sector companies, academic institutions, civil society organisations and other institutions that have contributed valuable research into the area of unpaid care and domestic work, which has been drawn upon as part of this product.

Unpaid Care and Domestic Work (UCDW) has increasingly become a Work and Opportunities for Women (WOW) focus, reflecting FCDO demand and international interest. This is the fourth WOW Helpdesk Guidance note and it builds on previous WOW queries and research. For example, [Double Day Helpdesk Query 53: Implications of COVID-19 on women informal workers](#) (Work and Opportunities for Women (WOW), 2019) and ["Unpaid and unrecognised: how business can realise the benefits of tackling women's invisible labour"](#)

Acronyms

Acronym	Meaning
CSA	Climate-smart agriculture
DFI	Development Finance Institutions
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
FCDO	Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office
FTE	Full time employment
GBV	Gender based violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HMG	His Majesty's Government
HSC	Household care survey
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
IFC	International Finance Corporation
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPV	Intimate partner violence
ITUC	International Trade Union Confederation
LMIC	Low and middle-income countries
LSMS	Living standards measurement survey
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NTFP	Non-timber forest products
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
P&G	Procter and Gamble
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SEWA	Self Employed Women's Association
UCDW	Unpaid care and domestic work
UN	United Nations
VAWG	Violence against women and girls
WOW	Work and Opportunities for Women
WSUP	Water and sanitation for the Urban Poor

Executive Summary:

Care is pivotal to our personal, economic, and social development. There is no such thing as a free lunch, nor a cost-less way to provide ‘lunch’. Time spent in unpaid care and domestic work (UCDW) is a valuable asset, and providing care also carries opportunity costs for individuals, families, and society.

Not a day goes by without billions of individuals, the majority of whom are women, spending substantial amounts of time cooking, cleaning, shopping, washing, or collecting water to care for healthy adults, as well as directly looking after children, the elderly, sick family members or relatives living with disabilities. UCDW supports and is affected by every aspect of economic and development programming, including labour market interventions, public services, infrastructure development or climate smart programming. **This provides an immense opportunity for development actors, including FCDO and other UK government departments, to recognise, reduce and redistribute UCDW while ensuring effective representation of carers, within a framework of resilience to economic shocks and climate change. Failing to facilitate and invest in unpaid care work entrenches poverty, and gender and economic inequality.**

Addressing and investing in UCDW has a moral imperative for generations of women and girls, and moreover has enormous economic returns. For example, a 1% increase in spending in the care economy over 8 selected countries¹ was estimated to result in a 11% increase in GDP as well as 6.3% increase in total employment levels (Onaran & Oyvat, 2023). UCDW has been recognised in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with a target to “value unpaid care work through the promotion of public services, infrastructure and other policies” included in SDG 5 and adopted by 193 countries.

FCDO advisers, and the governments, private sector companies and civil society actors that they work with, have many opportunities to address heavy and unequal UCDW and improve economic, social and equity outcomes of their programmes. Broadly, there are four areas of where action can be taken: data, policies, investments, and social norms:

- First, collect sufficient context-specific data about UCDW workloads and how these affect the ability of carers, especially women, to participate or benefit from programmes, and economic development in general;
- Second, design and implement policies that address UCDW responsibilities, and avoid exacerbating UCDW workloads;
- Third, invest in infrastructure, equipment and services that facilitates care, or reduces the time- and labour-intensiveness of domestic tasks; and
- Fourth, ensure that communications portray UCDW as a valuable, public good, as skilled work, and as a shared responsibility – between women and men, and across families, businesses and state entities.

This Guidance note has been prepared to provide FCDO and other UK government departments with guidance on UCDW to inform their global dialogue and development programming. It is organised around a framework of ‘5 Rs’ (adapted from international frameworks) to address UCDW: recognise, reduce, and redistribute unpaid care work; foster the representation of unpaid carers, and resilience in the times of climate change and crisis. It includes practical checklists for action by HMG staff

¹ Indonesia, South Korea, South Africa, The Philippines, Turkey, India, Colombia, and Chile.

working with the private sector, in economic development programming, social protection, infrastructure and crisis response.

Examples of actions that can be taken by different HMG staff (for detailed checklists aligned with the 5 R's see Table 1 p. 44):

Private sector engagement

- Support and invest in partners that develop equipment and technology that reduces time and resources required for domestic tasks (e.g., water, energy, cooking, washing, online services);
- Invest in care service providers run by women-owned businesses and women entrepreneurs; and
- Encourage the introduction of workplace services or subsidies that facilitate unpaid care and domestic work across the value chain (e.g., childcare services or on-site shopping in garment factories).

Economic Development Programmes

- Promote the use of context-specific time-use studies to monitor women's and men's paid- and unpaid care work hours;
- Support analysis that builds the business case for public and private investment in addressing UCDW; and
- Use diplomatic and advocacy channels to amplify the voices of unpaid carers and their organisations.

Infrastructure

- Collect sex-disaggregated data on transport for care trips, as well as commuting; on water collection and use for domestic work as well as for production;
- Invest in water infrastructure that reduces the time and distance to collect water, and electricity infrastructure to increase access to time-saving technology; and
- Develop guidelines and regulations for urban and residential development, social housing, etc that consider needs of unpaid carers (e.g., for mobility and access to services).

Publicly funded care services

- Redistribute costs of UCDW from (low-income) families to public sector by investing public funds into high quality and affordable childcare, eldercare, and care for people with disabilities;
- Provide skills training and ensure decent pay and working conditions for paid care workers; and
- Regulate the private sector care providers to ensure high quality services.

Social Protection

- Ensure that programme designs do not reinforce gendered norms and/or add to expectations of unpaid care work, such as conditional transfers based on mothers/parents volunteering, or carers of people with disabilities;
- Design universal non-contributory programmes that help to share the cost of unpaid care work and are also available for informal economy workers (free school meals, childcare vouchers, tax refunds, carer allowances; and
- Promote legal reform that supports paid parental and adoption leave, and flexible working, to make workplaces more conducive for workers with caring responsibilities.

Disaster Recovery and Climate Change

- Ensure damage assessments, needs assessments, and crisis impact monitoring instruments, collect data on changes in time spent on UCDW and needs of unpaid carers;
- Replace destroyed and damaged equipment used in domestic work as well as production (stoves, mills and laundry as well as tractors and boats); and
- Invest in services and subsidies for unpaid carers during pandemics, conflict and forced migration.



16.4 BILLION
HOURS ARE SPENT
ON UNPAID CARE WORK
EVERY DAY GLOBALLY

(Addati et al., 2018)

Debunking myths

Myths and misconceptions about UCDW often prevent decision-makers from engaging with the potential benefits of investing in UCDW. This guidance starts by naming and debunking ten common myths about UCDW that may be expressed by researchers, practitioners, private sector companies or development officials.

MYTH 1: THERE ARE BIGGER CHALLENGES TO TACKLE THAN UCDW.



FACT: UCDW is a fundamental, though often invisible, building block of economies and societies around the world. UCDW is essential for human and economic development. Governments and companies rely on UCDW to function effectively. ILO data estimates that 16.4 billion hours are spent on unpaid care work every day globally. This is the equivalent of 2 billion people (1 in 4 people worldwide) working 8 hours per day with no remuneration (Addati, Cattaneo, Esquivel, et al., 2018; Ward, 2022a). For several decades UCDW has been a priority issue for Southern feminists, who have highlighted the way that heavy and inequitable distributions of UCDW entrench poverty and exacerbate inequality among groups of people who are politically, socially and economically marginalised due to discrimination linked to (among other characteristics) race, ethnicity, age, disability status, and rural location (FEMNET, 2016)

MYTH 2: UNPAID CARE IS NOT “WORK”.



FACT: unpaid care and domestic work—both direct people care or collecting water, cleaning or cooking—is work that is also done by paid workers. Unpaid care requires effort and time, is a responsibility and an obligation, it has an opportunity cost and is not optional recreation. It is therefore considered productive work. Planning shopping, meal preparation, and satisfactory clothing for family members requires proficient organisational skills. Combined with managing illness or emotional health of dependents, this creates a significant ‘mental workload’ for unpaid carers. Misconstruing UCDW as ‘helping in the house’ also may lead to low pay and poor conditions for those paid to do the same work, such as domestic workers and nannies. According to the ILO’s latest statistical standards and “forms of work framework”, UCDW falls under “own-use production”(Budlender & Moussié, 2013a) International Labour Organization (ILO), 2013).

MYTH 3: UCDW IS A FAMILY ISSUE, AND WHO PROVIDES CARE IS SOLELY DRIVEN BY CULTURE AND SOCIAL NORMS.



FACT: patterns of unpaid care work – who does how much and under what conditions - are shaped and incentivised by policies, laws, public and private sector investments, as well as by culture or social norms. Institutions are not gender-neutral, policy and practice replicate and reinforce social norms that assign women responsibility for providing unpaid care. However, international conventions affirm that private and public sector entities are duty-bearers and responsible for the provision of quality, affordable, and accessible care services and infrastructure to enable an equal enjoyment of human rights (Sepulveda Carmona, 2013a; UN Women, 2022a).

MYTH 4: ADDRESSING UCDW ONLY BENEFITS INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES.



FACT: addressing UCDW can contribute to poverty reduction, economic growth and increased human and social capital. Without public and private sector policies and practices to support people with caring responsibilities, and due to social norms that assign women the responsibility of care provision, many women are forced to withdraw from the labour market completely, work part time, or engage in the informal economy (Gammage et al., 2019b). Losing women from the labour market also reduces the pool of human capital and skills available for firms and the economy, which can lead to lower economic growth, or reduced economic resilience in times of crisis (*Women, Business and the Law 2023*, 2023).

MYTH 5: UCDW IS NOT RELEVANT TO PRIVATE SECTOR COMPANIES



FACT: addressing UCDW can support supply-chain resilience, prevent workplace burnout, and improve company performance. Heavy and gender unequal UCDW responsibilities lead to burnout among workers, impacting women's productivity and the quality of the work they produce. At the extreme, it may force employees to leave formal employment (Gammage et al., 2019b). Policies and practices, including paid parental leave for mothers and fathers, on-site childcare or childcare benefits, flexible and part-time working and a company culture that encourages a more equitable division of labour of UCDW between men and women, can help employees, in particular women, to manage their paid and unpaid work responsibilities while reducing staff turn-over and increasing productivity. Brand reputation also improves when companies address UCDW (Oxfam & Unilever, 2019a).

MYTH 6: UCDW IS MOSTLY ABOUT TAKING CARE OF CHILDREN.



FACT: UCDW involves both direct care of people and indirect care such as domestic work. Despite the crucial importance of childcare, families also provide 'direct people care' for teenagers, elderly, ill people and people living with disabilities. Furthermore, 'indirect care work' (including meal preparation, fuel, water, washing and shopping) constitutes up to 80% of UCDW; these domestic tasks are often arduous without adequate equipment or infrastructure (Addati, Cattaneo, Esquivel, et al., 2018).

MYTH 7: CHILDCARE PROVISION IS THE MAGIC WAND TO "FIX" UCDW.



FACT: Childcare is only one aspect of UCDW; addressing UCDW requires changing social and economic structures and practices, critical to recognizing the significance and value of care work. Addressing heavy and unequal unpaid care workloads entails equipment, public services, and infrastructure to reduce the time required for families to carry out domestic tasks, as well as investment in high quality and affordable direct care services for elderly and disabled people, as well as childcare. It requires redistributing the disproportionate share of care responsibilities shouldered by women, more equitably between women and men, girls and boys, in households, communities; and shifting the costs and responsibilities of providing care from families towards the state and employers. (Coffey et al., 2020b; Devercelli & Beaton-Day, 2020; UN Women, 2022a). With broader investments in care-facilitating infrastructure and services, states and employers benefit from a more productive, better-rested workforce, as well as improving the health and wellbeing of women.

MYTH 8: CHANGING SOCIAL NORMS ON UCDW IS SIMPLY ABOUT MEN BEING BETTER FATHERS.



FACT: social norms need to change around men doing all types of UCDW, not only childcare. Furthermore, many institutions are promoting more positive narratives around UCDW – moving away from undervaluing care or conceptualising it as “a burden” to get rid of – and towards framing care work as valuable and essential building block of societies and economies. (Barker, Garg, et al., 2021; Chopra & Krishnan, 2022a; Karimli et al., 2016a; Samman, 2018a).

MYTH 9: UCDW IS NOT A RELEVANT CONSIDERATION DURING TIMES OF CRISIS, INCLUDING CLIMATE CHANGE-INDUCED DISASTERS, PUBLIC HEALTH CRISES, CONFLICT AND DISPLACEMENT CONTEXTS.



FACT: political, economic, public health, and environmental shocks often increase the weight of UCDW while limiting access to services and infrastructure that can make UCDW more manageable. Combined with other stresses such as surges in domestic violence, job losses and economic stress, this increase in UCDW, without adequate support, can lead to severe deteriorations in mental and physical health, especially among women (Barker, Heilman, et al., 2021). In addition, government responses to crises are often insensitive to and in some cases exploitative on UCDW, assuming that women will fill gaps in service provision that a government does not meet.

MYTH 10: GOVERNMENTS AND POLICY MAKERS CAN MAKE GOOD POLICY ON UCDW WITHOUT INCLUDING UNPAID CARERS IN POLICY DISCUSSIONS AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES.



FACT: public policy discussions that consistently exclude unpaid carers in policy discussions and decision-making processes, lead to inadequate and ineffective public policy. Public policy repeatedly fails to reflect or address the challenges around UCDW, and cost-benefit analyses rarely consider the majority of work time - hours of UCDW. For example, infrastructure projects have traditionally focused on promoting economic growth by facilitating energy, water, or travel to and from, industrial centres, leaving little or no room for investment decisions that support unpaid carers to carry out their work more efficiently. More participation of unpaid carers from diverse backgrounds (including male carers) in decision-making settings allows them to express different sets of priorities for the allocation of public resources, including on access to basic infrastructure (OECD, 2021).



UNPAID CARE WORK IS ESTIMATED AT 9% OF GLOBAL GDP

(Addati et al., 2018)

1. Introduction

Background

Addressing and investing in unpaid care and domestic work (UCDW) is a key element of economic and social development, poverty reduction, and is essential for achieving equal outcomes and rights for women and girls. In 2017, the UN included UCDW as one of the targets towards Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 concerning gender equality. Governments agreed to “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”. The UK government increasingly recognises the importance and relevance of UCDW.

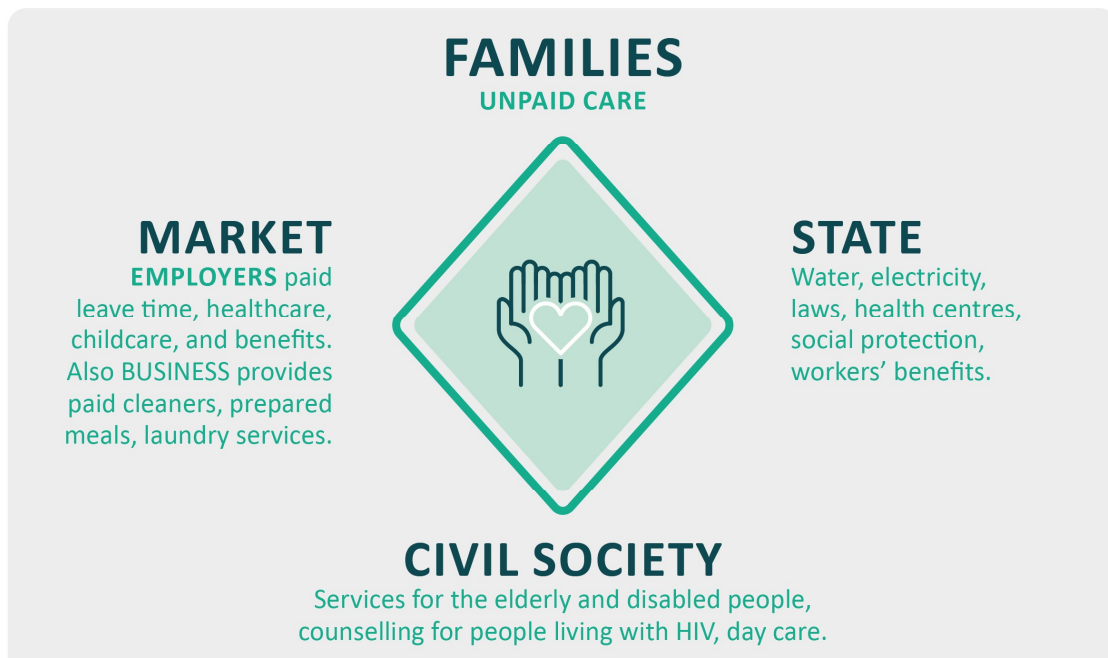
Terminology and frameworks

Unpaid care and domestic work are all unpaid non-market services provided by individuals within a household or family for the benefit of its members. UCDW consists of i) “direct care” (or “people care”), such as looking after children, older persons, persons with illness or disabilities, as well as support for healthy adults; and ii) “indirect care”, which are the domestic tasks that facilitate ‘people care’, such as shopping, cooking, cleaning, or collecting water and fuel. Voluntary community work that supports personal or household care, such as community kitchens or childcare, are also forms of UCDW (Addati et al., 2018; Coffey et al., 2020; UN Women, 2022). The ILO classifies UCDW as work, because it provides a service for oneself or others, which requires time and effort (International Labour Organization (ILO), 2013).

Paid care work is the direct care for persons performed within a household or institution for pay or profit. Paid care work spans public and private spheres and is provided in both the formal and informal economies (UN Women, 2022a). While paid and UCDW are inextricably linked, this Guidance Note will focus on UCDW, provide references to paid care where useful but not provide in-depth insights into aspects of paid care, such as labour regulations for paid carers.

‘Care Diamond’ refers to the four types of institutions: state entities, the private sector, civil society organisations and families, that provide care. Each country, state or society negotiates the division of responsibility between these four entities. The responsibilities and costs of providing care are shared between them and are determined by policies and practices in each society. The responsibilities can shift between them over time. This concept helps to evaluate the care of particular groups – the elderly, children, or people with disabilities – in each context. The performance of the ‘care diamond’ architecture is assessed by both carers and care receivers. It clarifies that UCDW is not inevitably ‘women’s work’, nor is their sole responsibility (Razavi, 2007). The Guidance Note prioritises exploring the roles and responsibilities of the public and private sectors in this regard, and points to the roles civil society continue to play in advocacy, research, innovation, and representation of unpaid carers. Redistributing care within families is also critical, through policies and practices that incentivise and support men to take responsibility for care, and through initiatives to shift gendered norms about care work. The important role civil society continue to play in advocacy and representation of unpaid carers, and the importance of redistributing care within families is also covered.

Figure 1: Care Diamond of Unpaid Care and Domestic Work



Source: adapted from Razavi (2007)

The Five Rs: Recognise, Reduce, Redistribute and Represent. This framework answers the questions ‘how can’ – or ‘how should’ – patterns of care provision change. Early frameworks included 3 Rs: recognise, reduce, and redistribute (Elson, 2008). ILO used a 5R framework in their broader discussions of care work that included paid carers. This framework included Representation of paid and unpaid carers, and Reward and decent work for paid carers (Addati et al., 2018). UN Women introduced Resilience in 2022 responding to the dynamic global environment and the impact of crises on unpaid carers (UN Women, 2022b). This Guidance Note uses a framework adapted from these and includes the following:

- **RECOGNISE:** the extent and value of UCDW in communities, workplaces, households and in policy, for example through stronger/more robust data and evidence, and explicit, distinct provisions for unpaid carers.
- **REDUCE:** the difficulty of domestic work, and the time required to carry out domestic tasks, though, for example, time- and labour-saving equipment, technology, and infrastructure.
- **REDISTRIBUTE:** the responsibility, costs, and work of UCDW provision: from (poor) families to the state, and private sector, and in households, shared more equally between women/girls, and men/boys.
- **REPRESENT:** unpaid carers in decision-making about policies, practices and investments in infrastructure and services that facilitate UCDW.
- **RESILIENCE:** recognising and addressing how climate change, natural disasters, conflict, economic shocks and pandemics increase the UCDW load, and impact the lives of unpaid carers and the need to take additional steps to address UCDW in times of crises.

More than 200 documents were reviewed in the preparation of this Guidance note (see References for key documents). The information gathered was coded using the Five Rs framework to form the basis of the findings presented herein.

Structure of the report

The targeted guidance consists of eight key sections. The second section provides the facts around UCDW. Section three to seven are organised around a framework of 5Rs to address UCDW: recognise, reduce, and redistribute unpaid care work; foster the representation of unpaid carers, and resilience in the times of climate change and crisis. The final section provides opportunities and recommendations for the FCDO and partner organisations on how to address and respond to UCDW.

2. Facts and significance of unpaid care and domestic work

The importance of UCDW for economic development

Unpaid care and domestic work (UCDW) is an essential building block of societies and economies. An estimated 16.4 billion hours of unpaid care work are carried out each day globally. Based on an hourly minimum wage, these services would amount to 9% of global GDP (Addati et al., 2018). There is no such thing as a free lunch, or a cost-less way to provide it. Not a day goes by without billions of individuals spending substantial amounts of time cooking, cleaning, shopping, washing, or collecting water to care for healthy adults, as well as directly looking after children, the elderly, sick family members or people living with disabilities. Without someone investing time and effort in these daily tasks, families, communities, workplaces, and whole economies would grind to a halt (Coffey et al., 2020). The impact of ageing populations and climate change will increase the time spent on UCDW (Coffey et al., 2020).

The importance of UCDW for economies is significant and increasing. Time spent on unpaid care and domestic work is a valuable asset that carries an opportunity cost for individuals, families and societies. In 2018, 647 million persons of working age were outside the labour force due to family responsibilities- 606 million of whom were women. Globally, 42% of working-age women are outside the paid labour force because of UCDW responsibilities, compared to 6% of men (Addati, Cattaneo, Esquivel, et al., 2018).

Addressing and investing in UCDW is a key ingredient to fighting poverty. The relationship between poverty and UCDW is cyclical, fuelled by inequality (Sepulveda Carmona, 2013b). While poverty increases the workloads of UCDW, heavy workloads of UCDW, in turn, increase the risk of poverty. Poor families cannot afford time-saving equipment or domestic help and often lack access to physical infrastructure such as piped water and electricity—making them more likely to engage in particularly long, arduous hours of UCDW (Barker, Heilman, et al., 2021; Coffey et al., 2020). In turn, UCDW poses a significant barrier to accessing education, skills and income-generating activities, increasing the vulnerability to both time and income poverty. Investing in unpaid care and domestic work (UCDW) improves outcomes in development projects and increases equity (Bibler & Zuckerman, 2013). It facilitates economic growth, by facilitating the provision of care that communities need to function, and by increasing opportunities for unpaid carers to engage in formal employment.

Recognising and reducing UCDW can boost private sector performance. People in paid work with heavy additional workloads of UCDW may struggle with productivity due to burnout, stress and distraction (Chopra & Zambelli, 2017a, Gammage et al., 2019b). In turn, as WOW research has demonstrated, “tackling women’s invisible labour” can help businesses realise benefits including talent retention, workforce performance, supply chain resilience, business growth and customer loyalty (Pickin, 2021).

UCDW and inequality

Gender disparities in UCDW remain both stark and resistant to change. UCDW is primarily carried out by women and girls. Globally, women do three to ten times more UCDW than men, with considerable differences between countries. Regionally, the unequal share of UCDW is especially stark in Africa, Asia and Pacific, and Arab states (Addati, Cattaneo, Esquivel, et al., 2018; Barker, Garg, et al., 2021). Gender disparities start early on in life: girls spend 40% more time on UCDW than boys, amounting to 160 million more hours per day, with implications for girls' educational opportunities (UNICEF, 2022). For example, halving the water fetching time in Ghana was found to increase girls' school attendance by 2.4 percentage points on average with stronger impacts in rural communities (Nauges & Strand, 2013). This gender gap increases with age, peaking for women between the ages of 25 and 44 – the prime years for employment and career-building (Coffey et al., 2020; Dhar, 2020). Critically, there has been little progress in changing the distribution of UCDW. Between 1983 and 2013, the gap between women's and men's contributions to UCDW globally narrowed by only seven minutes per day (Addati, Cattaneo, Esquivel, et al., 2018).

“[It] is hard to think of a human right that is not potentially affected in some way by the unequal distribution and difficulty of unpaid care work.”

Magdalena Sepulveda Carmona

Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights

The inequitable distribution of UCDW impinges women's enjoyment of human rights including economic opportunities, access to education and political participation. Carework can be rewarding for both men and women. For example, a survey of 12,000 people including 7000 men from 15 countries conducted by Equipundo and MenCare in 2023, found that participants who cared for others experienced “greater wellbeing”, with those who expressed satisfaction about how involved they were in raising their children being 1.5 times more likely to agree “I am the person I always wanted to be” and to “feel a sense of gratitude”(van der Gaag et al., 2023). However, when excessive amounts are placed on an individual and it involves a high degree of drudgery it becomes a burden that impacts wellbeing and opportunities (OECD, 2019a). In addition, women have the right to choose the extent to which they perform UCDW. They are often denied this right by communities and households, which assume women will take responsibility for UCDW due to entrenched social norms. The unequal distribution, intensity, and low recognition of UCDW undermines the dignity of women caregivers and obstructs women's ability to enjoy several human rights on an equal basis to men. These include access to education, decent work (with implications for retirement saving and poverty), health and participation in political life. Reducing and supporting the redistribution of UCDW not only supports women's well-being and household incomes but also supports productivity and economic growth (Ward, 2022a).

Women living in poverty experience higher levels of UCDW. Women and girls in poor households spend more time on UCDW than those in non-poor households in all countries at all levels of development. This is because of a lack of access to services, lack of resources to pay for time-saving infrastructure and technology, and inadequate infrastructure (Coffey et al., 2020; OECD, 2019a). Women from the poorest households² in study areas in Uganda, Zimbabwe, India, the Philippines and

² Oxfam's definition of poverty is based on a wealth index. Respondents were asked whether they owned different asset variables, and if yes, how much of it. They summed up the number of total assets and divided

Kenya, spent an additional 40 minutes a day on average on UCDW compared to women in wealthier households in the same communities, amounting to almost five hours more work per week, and an additional year across their lifetimes (Coffey et al., 2020). Women living in rural areas across Africa also are estimated to spend significantly more time on average on UCDW than women in urban and peri-urban areas (Budlender & Moussié, 2013a).

Heavy and unequal UCDW workloads trap women in a self-reinforcing cycle of income and time poverty. UCDW is the “quicksand” that traps women in poverty throughout their lifetime: it drives school drop-out for girls and limits opportunities for women’s engagement in paid and/or formal work with implications for immediate and future economic security. Being obligated to prioritise UCDW or taking part-time and informal kinds of employment to have the flexibility to fulfil care responsibilities reduces women’s contributions to social security, and the accumulation of assets and wealth (Coffey et al., 2020). This makes women with heavy UCDW loads more vulnerable to poverty in older age than men and often means they must continue to work longer than their male counterparts (Coffey et al., 2020). Additionally, older women spend over twice as much time on UCDW than older men, despite having care needs of their own (Horstead & Bluestone, 2018). Households where grandparents are the primary carers of children, are households at the highest risk of poverty in low and middle-income countries due to additional barriers that older people face to earning (Age International, 2021).

The situation is even worse for women who experience discrimination and social exclusion on other grounds (Sepulveda Carmona, 2013a). Combined with discrimination based on gender, people who experience social and economic exclusion due to characteristics like race, class, age, sexual orientation and gender identity, disability status, marital status and migration status, are likely to be confronted with higher loads of UCDW, with lower access to time-saving technology, infrastructure and services (UN Women, 2022a). This also includes lone mothers who are responsible for UCDW and the family’s economic survival, often far away from kin and other support networks. Investing in UCDW is a significant factor for strategies to promote equality by income, rural location, marital status and migration status, among other characteristics (Coffey et al., 2020a). Investments in care-facilitating services and infrastructure that are located in marginalised communities may therefore have a correspondingly beneficial impact on women experiencing discrimination and social exclusion.

Violence against women and girls and UCDW

The relationship between UCDW and violence against women is complex and best understood within structural inequalities inside and outside the home. Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is endemic, affecting on average, one-third of all women within their lifetime (World Health Organization, 2021). Global evidence finds that while risk factors are multiple and interrelated (Fulu & Heise, 2015), rigid gender roles, that position men as breadwinners and decision makers, and women as subordinate carers play a key role in relation to VAWG, perpetrated by intimate partners or by strangers (L. Rost & Koissy-Kpein, 2018).

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) and domestic violence is often a socially acceptable response to women not fulfilling their socially defined and expected care roles. It is risky for women to transgress traditional gendered norms, with violence considered (by both men and women) as an acceptable response to women perceived to be neglecting their UCDW responsibilities. (Coffey et al., 2020; Nanda et al., n.d.) In the Philippines and Uganda, men who accepted the beating of women for perceived inadequate provision of care tended to spend less time on care activities (L. Rost & Koissy-Kpein,

respondents into quintile groups based on the number of assets owned. They then used a binary variable for all countries except India, which took the value 1 if households were placed in the poorest half and 0 if the households were placed in the better off half of the wealth index. In India, they used a variable that indicated whether the household was above or below the poverty line.

2018). Other research³ from 2014, across a selection of rural communities in Uganda, Ethiopia, Colombia, the Philippines and Zimbabwe, found that out of 1,139 households, on average 25% of all respondents considered it acceptable to beat or harshly or criticise a woman for the perception that they had failed to perform a care task (Karimli et al., 2016).

In some contexts, UCDW tasks also put women at increased risk of non-partner violence. This is particularly the case for women and girls needing to travel long distances to gather water and fuel, leaving them exposed to violence enroute (Coffey et al., 2020). These risks are exacerbated in contexts of displacement such as refugee camps, in conflict contexts with roving armed groups, and in climate change affected areas with intense resource scarcity due to flooding, droughts, or de-forestation. Research conducted in a Ugandan refugee camp during 2022 with adolescent girls and community elders found that adolescent girls were at particular risk of sexual violence when collecting water, especially in the dry season, where they were required to walk unaccompanied for long distances, outside of the camp to collect water (Logie, 2022).

VAWG risk mitigation is an essential ingredient of do no harm⁴ within economic development programming, but it is complex, requires appropriate funding and careful design and consideration. Increasing women's access to paid work alone will not automatically reduce VAWG in many contexts. Economic interventions, targeted at increasing women's income, can improve families' economic security, thereby reducing household conflict over limited resources. It may also increase women's decision-making power and/or give them the financial means to leave a violent relationship. On the other hand, women's access to financial resources can also increase the likelihood of household conflict over how to spend resources, or time conflicts leading to women being perceived as 'failing to provide' adequate UCDW or lead to men violently attempting to reassert their status.

Economic development programmes with complementary interventions designed to shift gendered norms about men and women providing care, and VAWG, may reduce the acceptability of violence as a response to changing roles in households (see social norms, section 5) (Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), 2022; Taylor et al., 2015). Many development agencies use toolkits to identify and mitigate GBV/VAWG risks, in a range of sectoral programmes. For example, in water supply and sanitation programmes (Water for Women, 2019) and public transport (European Bank for Reconstruction and Development et al., 2020). At the same time, paid work exposes women to new risks related to (sexual) harassment at or on the way to work (European Bank for Reconstruction and Development et al., 2020). In addition to the moral imperative to address VAWG, research has shown that it makes commercial sense for large and small companies to address violence in and outside workplaces (Garbarino & Kucharski, 2018; International Finance Corporation, 2017).

**OVER 80% OF UNPAID
CARE WORK CONSISTS OF
HOUSEHOLD WORK**

(Addati et al., 2018)



³ In 2014 a Household Care Survey was conducted in between 80-500 households across communities in Colombia, Ethiopia, the Philippines, Uganda and Zimbabwe. These amounted to 1,139 households in total, with one adult male and one adult female respondent in each household.

⁴ The "do no harm" principle holds that organisations must ensure their actions do not cause additional disadvantage or harm to community members, whether they are direct beneficiaries of a programme or not.

3. Recognising unpaid care and domestic work

Recognising UCDW is the first vital step to valuing work that is largely overlooked and consequently ignored by decision-makers. As long as UCDW is excluded from data collection and national debates, and from private sector workforce assessments, our understanding of economies and societies will remain partial and biased, resulting in programmes and policies that reinforce social inequalities.

Unseen and undervalued

UCDW is an essential building block of our societies and economies but remains largely unseen and undervalued. It is key to functioning households and to enabling adults to engage in paid employment. It subsidises public care services and it makes a significant contribution to economies as well as to individual and societal well-being (Ward, 2022b). Estimates based on time-use survey data in 64 countries (representing 66.9% of the world's working-age population) shows that every day, hours spent on UCDW are the equivalent of 2 billion full-time workers (Addati, Cattaneo, Equivel, et al., 2018). Nevertheless, UCDW is largely unaccounted for in national statistics and overlooked in policy debates and development programming. Many people perceive UCDW to be less valuable than paid work, even by the women and men who engage in and benefit directly from these activities (Budlender & Moussié, 2013). In addition, a culture that undervalues UCDW, leads to poor pay and conditions of those paid to carry out care and domestic work. These are primarily women, often from racial, ethnic minority or migrant groups, in low paid and precarious employment (Addati, Cattaneo, Esquivel, et al., 2018; Coffey et al., 2020).

By failing to collect data on unpaid care, policy makers lack a full and accurate understanding of the labour market and economic growth. It is widely acknowledged that social norms which place the responsibility for UCDW with women, decrease women's labour force participation, undermine equal pay and reduce women's access to secure and quality employment. Moreover, when women struggle to reconcile UCDW with paid work, this pushes them into part-time, informal or vulnerable employment or "occupational downgrading", where they accept paid employment below their skills. Despite the strong evidence on the unequal distributions of UCDW between men and women, there is a lack of data on the issue which is a key "missing link" in the analysis of gender gaps in labour outcomes (Ferrant et al., 2014). Policy decisions during periods of austerity often disproportionately disadvantage unpaid carers, who are predominantly women. For example, public sector service cuts, which are often framed as "savings", in reality shift the real costs of providing care to unpaid carers, creating barriers to their engagement in income generation (Criado-Perez, 2019).

Economic development programming consistently fails to recognise or address UCDW, undermining efforts for poverty reduction. A review of 119 UK government women's economic empowerment (WEE) and economic development programmes found only one programme with an indicator on unpaid care (Hearle et al., 2020) Full-time equivalent employment (FTE) is the widely used indicator for measuring the success of job creation in economic development programming. By definition this incentivises a focus on paid work, neither appreciating the importance of UCDW in itself or as a barrier to women's access to paid work. Women may be perceived to be 'not succeeding' to work full time. This view fails to recognise that women's total work hours (paid work and UCDW) are consistently far more than full-time, and more than men's total work hours. Instead of advocating for women to reduce their hours on care work - which can have negative consequences for dependents - WEE and economic development programmes can address gender inequality in total work hours, by encouraging men to spend *more* time on UCDW (Addati, Cattaneo, Equivel, et al., 2018). Moreover, an analysis from the OECD Policy Dialogue on Women's Economic Empowerment shows that policies and programmes rarely include UCDW as a binding constraint, particularly in programmes in which

reducing UCDW is not the main intended outcome (for example in transport and infrastructure programmes)(Calder et al., 2020; OECD, 2019a).

Initiatives to improve the visibility of UCDW:

Improved data on the number of unpaid and paid carers, and better measurement of the time spent on unpaid care in recent years has drawn attention to the economic contribution of UCDW and to the impact of policies on it. There are several ways to close the gender data gaps in paid and unpaid work and choosing context-relevant solutions will be essential for policy- and programme-relevant information. Recent years have seen improvements in this though challenges still remain:



There has been some progress in incorporating paid care work and UCDW into national statistics. Historically, UCDW has gone unmeasured in official statistics, particularly in labour force surveys. In 2013, the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS 19) agreed to begin measuring all types of work (paid and unpaid) in labour force surveys, challenging national statistical agencies to develop reliable, comparable and simple measures of unpaid household and care work (International Labour Organization (ILO 2013). Since 2013, the ILO, with support from the Women’s Work and Employment Partnership, has been testing new ways to measure all types of work and has released guidance notes to support these efforts (Data2x, 2019).



Time use and household surveys are increasingly used to measure paid work and UCDW but are not without methodological challenges. Time-use surveys are a commonly used method to understand how people spend their time in a defined period. However, UCDW has historically been overlooked in this method of data collection. Now the availability of data is increasing, including comparing time use across countries and contexts (Rubiano Matulevich & Viollaz, 2019). The World Bank has been working to update the Living Standards Measurement Survey (LSMS), to collect better data on UCDW. They have done this through greater emphasis on eliciting self-reported information and conducting private interviews on labour and time use (Hasanbasri et al., 2021). Given an estimated 75% of childcare is carried out while simultaneously performing other tasks (including paid work), time spent on caregiving tends to be hidden and grossly underestimated if information on simultaneous activities is not captured (Data2X, 2018; Mueller, 2018). Oxfam’s Household Care Surveys, detailed in Box 1, are one example of efforts to overcome these barriers, by asking respondents what else they were doing during the hour (e.g., cooking while doing home-based production) and whether they were responsible for supervising a child or dependent adult during the time period. Action Aid’s Making Care Visible programme, detailed in Box 2, provides another example of how organisations are overcoming barriers to measuring UCDW.



Assessment tools that gather data on UCDW during the design and implementation of development programming, helps ensure programming reflects and responds to UCDW loads. CARE’s training manual on Family Business Management has integrated exercises on ‘How we work together’ with couples discussing a daily time clock of men’s and women’s activities and decision-making as part of successful strategies to develop family businesses (CARE, 2020). Action Aid and the Institute for Development Studies’ Redistributing Care Work training curriculum uses a series of focus group exercises to develop UCDW action plans for programmes on public services, decent work and environment, among others. (IDS and Action Aid, 2015). The Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index is a survey-based methodology designed to measure the empowerment, agency, and inclusion of women in the agricultural sector, which includes an analysis of women’s paid, unpaid care and domestic workloads. (Malapit H et al, 2015). Oxfam’s Rapid Care Analysis (RCA) is designed to be simple, low-cost, and easy to integrate into existing exercises for programme design or monitoring. The RCA

collects a context-specific snapshot of time use data, sufficient for programme design, or for private sector to invest in facilitating workers' unpaid care work. Participants gather information on UCDW activities by gender and age that is context-specific, on available and needed services and infrastructure for UCDW, on social norms, and then identify relevant, appropriate interventions. An adapted RCA for workplaces and employers is in development (Chipfupa et al., 2018; Kidder et al., 2016, Pionetti et al, 2023).

Box 2: Oxfam's Household Care Surveys

Since 2013, Oxfam's Women's Economic Empowerment and Care (WE-Care) programme has developed new methodologies and evidence about care work to enable development actors to address women's heavy and unequal UCDW workloads. The Household Care Survey (HCS) gathers quantitative data about factors impacting care workloads, including public services, household equipment and social norms. It employs a one-day recall for time use and collects data on secondary and supervision activities which helped to highlight the large amounts of UCDW undertaken by women. It also trialled methods to collect data on children's care activities, which are often excluded by standard time-use surveys (L. Rost, 2018).

Box 3: Action Aid's "Making Care Visible" Programme

This programme engaged 107 women in Kenya, 100 in Nepal, 42 in Nigeria and 84 in Uganda, along with a comparison group of men, by asking them to fill out a time-use diary (Budlender & Moussié, 2013b). This programme was implemented in one rural and one urban or peri-urban area in each country. These women were from a variety of different ages, for example, young women, women with small children, and older women who were widowed. Most women were in heterosexual relationships and tended to remain in joint-family structures so were not solely responsible for both paid work and unpaid work. In Uganda, more women headed their own households than in other countries. Most of these women were solely responsible for paid and unpaid work. Time spent on different activities included paid work, housework, childcare, sleeping, and social and cultural activities. Women participants then met in groups to reflect together on the findings from these diaries. These groups were voluntary and the women who joined them determined the frequency and timing of their meetings based on their workloads at any particular time. These groups became spaces for women to discuss their local context and the power dynamics that impact their experiences.

Group analysis of the diaries found that men in all countries spent more time on social and cultural activities, self-care, and mass media use, while women's work time exceeded that of men when all types of work are included. In the Nepal study group, on average, women worked 84 minutes for every 60 minutes worked by the Nepalese men. A similar ratio was found in Kenya. While the limited timeframe of the programme, means there is not conclusive evidence of a fundamental shift in power relations within the household following this programme, the programme found that the diaries helped men realise the huge amount of work performed by women. In some cases, this led to a re-distribution of UCDW between partners. For example, one male participant said, "I used to carry my child only for pleasure not because I saw it as my responsibility to do so, but having participated in this discussion, I now see that I have been unfair to my wife and I now make a commitment to take a more active part in caring for our children and doing other housework".

4. Reducing the difficulty of UCDW: infrastructure and equipment facilitating care work

A high proportion of the time spent on UCDW is dedicated to domestic work, despite common narratives that UCDW is primarily childcare. It is estimated that globally, domestic work accounts for 81.8% of the UCDW performed, with people care accounting for only 13% (and 5.2% for volunteer work) (Addati, et al., 2018). Research from India, Nepal, Rwanda and Tanzania finds that a lack of infrastructure, such as water, sanitation, energy or transport, significantly impacts how much time and effort is required for domestic work (Chopra & Zambelli, 2017b).

Reducing domestic work is key to reducing the weight of UCDW placed on women, with substantial implications for women’s economic empowerment (Chopra & Zambelli, 2017; de Henau et al., 2017). Investments in infrastructure and equipment to facilitate care work have the potential to reduce the time and drudgery of domestic work (de Henau et al., 2017). In addition to using freed up time for income earning activities, research finds that women’s preferences for using the hours saved when domestic work is reduced, also includes rest, socialising, and spending more time on direct people care, such as quality time with children (Kidder et al., 2014).

Investments in care-supporting infrastructure and equipment have untapped potential to reduce unpaid domestic work and be a “game changer” for women’s economic empowerment (Mohun & Biswas, 2016). Investments in infrastructure have the potential to reduce the time and energy needed to collect water and fuel, to dispose of waste, to access health services and education, and to travel to visit relatives who need care support. However, few infrastructure programmes set out explicit aims to reduce – and even fewer to redistribute – women’s UCDW (OECD, 2019a).

Efforts to reduce UCDW must be accompanied by efforts to change gendered expectations around UCDW. Investments in care-supporting infrastructure and technology which improves UCDW efficiency will not necessarily reduce the overall time women spend on UCDW on its own, if social expectations are not also addressed. For example, in one community in Zimbabwe, the introduction of electricity infrastructure was primarily used to light houses, leading to expectations that women would undertake UCDW later into the evening (L. Rost & Koissy-Kpein, 2017). Similar risks are associated with technology that improves the efficiency of cooking or cleaning. Instead of reducing the overall time women spend on UCDW, this technology may increase expectations around the number of times women cook or do laundry. Shifting social norms and supporting the redistribution of UCDW is discussed further in Section 5.

Actively including women who carry out UCDW in the design of infrastructure programmes enables them to express their preferences. Time-saving infrastructure or labour-saving technologies are more likely to be prioritised where women with significant UCDW responsibilities are engaged in consultations during the design of infrastructure projects, and in decisions around how infrastructure investment funds are used. Without the inclusion of people from diverse backgrounds in the design of infrastructure programmes, it will be difficult to develop systems that are inclusive of diverse user needs (OECD, 2019a). Women who conduct UCDW are best placed to suggest ways that infrastructure, services, and technology can reduce UCDW (ARUP et al., 2022). It is important not to assume that including women in the design of infrastructure programmes will necessarily increase their responsiveness to UCDW. Women from more wealthy backgrounds may conduct less UCDW because they are able to pay others to carry this out instead. Therefore, programmes must make a conscious effort to include women from lower economic backgrounds who carry higher loads of UCDW in the design process.

Reducing UCDW through investments in infrastructure:



Investing in water infrastructure reduces the time and distance needed to collect water. In Sub Saharan Africa alone, one study estimated 40 billion hours a year spent on water collection for households, with 71% of this work carried out by women (Sepulveda Carmona, 2013). This was equivalent to a year's worth of labour by the French workforce. Research from selected rural communities in the Philippines and Zimbabwe found that women living in households with improved access to water sources spent 2 hours less time on UCDW in Philippines and nearly 1 hour less in Zimbabwe compared to households without improved water systems. Women now have more time to spend on activities of their choice including paid work. In villages with new or repaired water and laundry facilities, women spent on average 1.3 hour more each day on paid activities in Philippines and 1.2 hours more in Zimbabwe compared to women in villages with no new facilities (Hall, 2020). Additionally, data from the 2017 HCS survey found that improved water access (i.e. not a natural water source like a river or spring) led to a reduction in the time that these women spent in multi-tasking care activities, and to girls sleeping longer hours in the Uganda study area, and to girls studying for longer periods in the Zimbabwe communities. Successful initiatives to address UCDW through investment in water infrastructure have used careful project design to reach those most in need, including the lowest-income families, female-headed households, and the most remote families. They have also included complementary efforts to change gender norms around who collects water to ensure this work does not fall disproportionately to women.



Improving electricity infrastructure increases access to time-saving technology and information about public health. A lack of access to electricity within communities can entrench heavy workloads of UCDW by posing a barrier to the use of time-saving technology and causing significant delays for women accessing services or local businesses that require electricity to run (Chopra & Zambelli, 2017). Research from rural areas in Southern Philippines found that electricity access led to women spending fewer hours on UCDW, more hours on leisure and an increase in the equitable distribution of UCDW within the household. (L. Rost & Koissy-Kpein, 2017). Evidence from studies in Bangladesh suggests that household electricity would reduce women's UCDW time by as much as 70% (Schaub et al., 2023). In addition, when access to electricity has increased access to television, the exposure to more public health information, has been associated with reduced fertility in South Asia (Fujii & Shonchoy, 2020; Tasciotti et al., 2022). This is important since IMF analysis across 18 advanced and emerging economies found that higher fertility is associated with longer hours of unpaid care work, mostly carried out by women (Alonso, Brussevich, Dabla-Norris, et al., 2019). Subsidised connections and innovative pricing policies, in addition to expanding the distribution network, help to increase the number of families able to connect and benefit from electricity access.



Safe, accessible and child friendly public transport, along with transport routes focused on local connections, reduces the time women spend on UCDW. Evidence across many countries shows that women and men typically have very different travel patterns (Legovini et al., 2022). Women tend to walk longer distances, are more reliant on public transport, make more frequent trips with multiple stops, which combine various tasks, and travel with children or elderly relatives. In contrast, men tend to take direct, linear trips focused on getting to and from paid work (EBRD, 2011; Roscoe, 2020). Without accessible transportation, people with disabilities and their caregivers are more likely to suffer social exclusion (Agarwal & Steele, 2016). The benefits of better transport for women are many, including safety, access to economic opportunities, social mobility and improved access to health facilities (Chopra &

Zambelli, 2017), schools, or grocery stores (de Henau et al., 2017). Despite this, in most countries, transport infrastructure tends to be designed to cater to the needs of commuters going to paid work, and largely ignores the safety requirements and travel patterns of people performing UCDW (Criado-Perez, 2019). Transport systems that are designed to consider the needs of carers can reduce the time and effort required for unpaid care tasks. They should integrate formal and informal transport, ensure personal safety on and around public transport, be inclusive and affordable, and ensure physical accessibility for carers and their dependents (ADB, 2022).



Digital infrastructure and technology can help to reduce unpaid care work. Modelling by the IMF found that, even when controlling for a country's level of economic development, women in countries with greater internet access spend significantly less time undertaking unpaid care work (Alonso, Brussevich, Dabla-norris, et al., 2019). A study of digitalisation of wages in the Bangladesh garment factories shows how receiving wages directly into a mobile money account enabled women to send remittances home to rural areas, saving them long bus journeys to take cash home (Business for Social Responsibility, 2021). Start-up IT businesses, including in low and middle-income countries, now provide ways to order prepared food, medicines, groceries and other shopping using mobile phone apps. There are now a range of on-demand services including ride-hailing, digital finance, and shopping across Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, that contribute to helping families with their unpaid workloads (Gojeck, n.d.). The gig-economy also has the potential to open new markets for small traders and home-based workers, many of whom are women who are balancing paid and unpaid care work. However, in the absence of a sufficiently robust regulatory framework, digital platforms can also lead to exploitative conditions, such as lack of income security, and limited access to sick leave and social protection, for many of those working in it (Hunt et al., 2019; International Labour Organization (ILO), 2021).

Reducing UCDW through investments in care-supporting equipment:



Investments in care-supporting equipment can help to reduce the time and drudgery associated with domestic work and improve equitable distribution of domestic tasks within households. Critical equipment includes water-related, and fuel- and cooking-related equipment and tools, such as containers for carrying water, fuel, and food, and refrigerators, as well as equipment related to dependent care, such as washing machines and wash basins (Schaub et al., 2023). Research shows that in some contexts, providing equipment can make it more acceptable for men to do certain care work activities, such as grinding grains with grinding mills or fetching water with a bicycle, rather than head-loading water (Oxfam Canada, 2021). In an Ethiopia community study, research found that men were more likely to engage in water collection if there was a water tap located close to their homes (Karimli et al., 2016). Oxfam's programme evaluation research found that a combination of equipment and social norms interventions, such as community awareness activities or training of care champions (men, women or couples willing to show public support and lead discussions on the theme), had the greatest impact on the likelihood that men would increase their participation in UCDW (León-Himmelstine, C., & Salomon, H. (2020).



Investing in energy efficient cook stoves, using time-saving and cleaner technology such as electricity can significantly reduce the time women spend collecting fuel. An estimated 880 million people worldwide spend part of their time collecting fuelwood or producing charcoal, many of them women (FAO & UNEP, 2020). A study from South Asia, found that on average the use of energy efficient cookstoves reduced the time spent on fuel collection by 18%, similar studies in Northern India found that time reductions were as high as 80% and the reduction was 76% in the Nicaragua study sample (Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves,

2021). In addition, using clean fuels reduced cooking time for women studied in South Asia by 30% and in Kenya by 2 hours and 36 minutes. Around 2.4 billion people worldwide cook on open fires or inefficient stoves and household air pollution was responsible for an estimated 3.2 million deaths per year in 2020. The greatest burdens of illness caused by indoor air pollution are borne by women and children in low and middle-income countries. Respiratory illness and accidental burns add to women's UCDW (WHO, 2022).



Supporting innovation in cleaning technology to reduce domestic work. Low-cost laundry devices that do not require electricity or large amounts of water have been designed in many countries. After interviewing unpaid carers in rural families in 17 countries, The Laundry Machine Project partnered with the RS Group PLC to deliver thousands of laundry devices in Uganda, Lebanon and Iraq among other countries (University of Bath, 2022). The Domestos brand partnered with UNICEF to design and construct clean toilets in schools (Domestos, 2022). In India, in 2020, they exceeded their goal to build 25 million toilets, by 3 million.



**Globally, women
do three to ten times
more UCDW than men**

(Addati et al., 2018)

5. Redistributing UCDW for well-being, equality and economic returns

The 'Care Diamond' of care provision

Redistributing UCDW entails redistributing costs and responsibility from (low-income) families to the state and private sector and redistributing work between women and girls to men and boys. In every society, the responsibility and costs of providing care for people is negotiated and divided between four actors in a Care Diamond: state entities; the private sector and employers; civil society and families (Razavi, S. 2007). As families may be the least powerful actor, they often shoulder disproportionately the costs and work of care provision. This outcome may be reinforced by narratives that care is 'naturally' a private, rather than public, responsibility, entrenching poverty for many families - low-income, marginalised or rural, for example - who are unable to access services or adequate infrastructure to facilitate UCDW, as discussed above. Redistribution of the costs and responsibility for providing care is therefore as important as reducing the difficulty of domestic tasks.

The public sector has a key role in balancing the costs of providing UCDW between different actors and groups. Addressing UCDW is key to public sector strategies to promote economic growth and human rights. This includes by establishing legal and policy frameworks, investing in care services, and delivering social protection programmes that help to redistribute responsibility for unpaid care towards the state. Likewise, governments can collect data and statistics to make UCDW more visible (Section 3) and invest in infrastructure (Section 4). Without adequate consideration of and support for UCDW, and due to social norms that assign women the responsibility of care provision, many women are forced to withdraw from the labour market completely, work part time, or engage in the informal economy. In the Middle East, where female labour force participation historically is low compared to other regions, 73% of working-age⁵ women are reportedly outside of the paid labour force due to UCDW, compared with just 1% of men (Coffey et al., 2020). The IMF estimates that increasing female employment would bring greater economic gains for a country than an equivalent increase in male employment⁶ (Ostry et al., 2018). Losing women from the paid labour market also reduces the pool of human capital and skills available for firms and the economy, which can contribute to lower economic growth, and potentially reduce economic resilience (*Women, Business and the Law 2023*, 2023).

Private sector support to address and redistribute UCDW improves productivity and business value. Similarly, the private sector has a key role to play in redistributing responsibility for providing UCDW, including through establishing workplace policies that reflect the needs of unpaid carers, providing services and paid leave for care, promoting social norms change through branding and advertising, and designing innovative products that reduce UCDW. When heavy and unequal UCDW obliges women to reduce or leave formal employment, it causes firms to experience high turnover of staff, which can impact firm productivity and profit (Coffey et al., 2020; Gammage et al., 2019b). A survey with more than 1,500 employees in the United States revealed that 32% of all respondents had voluntarily left a job during their career due to caregiving responsibilities (Fuller & Raman, 2019). In addition, WOW research found that garment workers in Bangladesh frequently do not return to work

⁵ "Working age" is commonly defined by ILO and others as all persons aged 15 and older, although this is not specified in the original source.

⁶ The IMF found that there were two reasons that previously had not been included in the analysis which would engender larger economic benefits from gender inclusion than simply bringing more workers into the workforce. The first was that there is an economic benefit from diversity in the workforce as women bring in new skills. The second is that as families get richer due to economic development the demand for services increases, and labour is reallocated to the service sectors where there is greater equality in employment. Suppressing women's participation in the labour force would come at an economic cost.

after having children (Work and Opportunities for Women (WOW), 2019a). Losing trained workers imposes significant, though often unseen, costs on firms, even in small and medium-sized companies or low-skilled sectors (Gammage et al., 2019a; Oxfam & Unilever, 2019a). In addition, for women who remain in paid work, heavy UCDW affects their health and well-being and reduces productivity through absenteeism or presenteeism (e.g. difficulty working due to stress and distraction caused by the “mental load” of managing paid and unpaid work, or concerns for the safety of children left unsupervised) (Garcia-Alonso et al., 2019; Work and Opportunities for Women (WOW), 2019a).

Unequal distributions of UCDW between men and women are underpinned by deep rooted social norms that position care as the responsibility of women. Equimundo is a research and advocacy organisation promoting gender equality through engaging men and boys. Equimundo carried out research in Brazil and other countries to understand the factors maintaining and shifting gendered norms. Equimundo’s Program H has worked in 36 countries over two decades with young men and boys, encouraging reflection about norms related to manhood and gendered roles. (Equimundo, 2002) With the worldwide MenCare network, Equimundo’s State of the World’s Fathers 2021 report evaluates the need for an ‘ethic of male care’ in schools and in the media. (Equimundo and MenCare, 2021) Their 2019 survey across seven countries found that 85% of men would ‘do whatever it takes to be very involved’ in the early stages of caring for a new-born or adopted child. (MenCare and Equimundo, 2019) Efforts to increase men’s participation in UCDW is often undermined by social norms that consider it acceptable to mock men who do so. For example, a survey of 1,123 households across rural communities in Uganda, Ethiopia, Colombia, the Philippines and Zimbabwe found 20% of respondents (slightly more men than women) considered it acceptable to shame or mock a man for carrying out at least one form of unpaid care (Karimli et al., 2016b). Research on Oxfam’s Women’s Economic Empowerment and Care (WE-Care) programme has found that subtle adjustments to certain tasks such as the use of technology to support these activities make them more acceptable for men to do and may bring about more permanent changes to social norms than attempting radical adjustments to gendered roles (Oxfam Canada, 2021; L. A. Rost, 2021).

Civil society often fills the gaps when the public and private sectors fail to adequately share the responsibility for care provision and may provide services funded by public funds. Civil society organisations may be supported to conduct research on UCDW, to design and pilot innovations in infrastructure, services and shifting norms, or to organise the representation of unpaid carers in processes, among other roles. This section focuses on the roles, or potential roles, of the public and private sectors in sharing responsibility and costs of UCDW - as this has been a gap in the current resources - as well as redistribution between women and men. It recognises that civil society organisations are valuable partners in these efforts, and involved in development programmes and policy formulation, as well as being specialist service providers that are publicly funded.

Public sector support and investment to redistribute UCDW:

Legal and policy frameworks

The number of governments committing to or adopting policies addressing the care economy is increasing thanks to initiatives at global, regional and national level. At the international level, the SDG target 5.4 on UCDW that governments signed up to in 2017 nudged the momentum for change. The ASEAN Comprehensive Framework on the Care Economy adopted by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is an example of an initiative being taken by governments at a regional level. It charts out strategic priorities and sectoral initiatives to be jointly implemented by member states (ASEAN, 2021). Nationally, Uruguay is an example of a country that has adopted a National Integrated Care system consisting of five components: services, training, regulation, information and knowledge management, and communication. These components cut across all care services and an institutional architecture has been established bringing together the different sectors involved to plan, implement,

and monitor it (UN Women, 2019). On the whole though, efforts by governments to support legal and policy frameworks that reflect the needs of unpaid carers have been less comprehensive and more targeted and include:



Designing social protection strategies that take the needs and challenges of unpaid carers into account and are responsive to the needs of and ensures support for people living with disabilities. Many social protection programmes that consider UCDW are designed in ways that reinforce the gender stereotypes which position women as carers (OECD, 2019). For example, they often rely on women providing care for children, the elderly, sick people or people with disabilities rather than providing quality, professional, publicly funded care services to support families of those in need of care. These programmes assume that women will provide care without payment, or in exchange for low levels of financial support. An Institute of Development Studies (IDS) review of government social transfer and cash transfer programmes across 53 low- and middle-income countries found that out of 149 social protection policies, only 23 articulated an intent to tackle long hours of UCDW (IDS, 2014). Of these, unconditional cash transfer programmes were the most care sensitive, with 40% including some element of support for unpaid care. Comparatively, only 12% of conditional cash transfer programmes had components supporting UCDW.



Ensuring care services are regulated, to guarantee high quality care provision. Without adequate State regulation of care facilities, families have to make their own arrangements to ensure adequate provision of care (Sepulveda Carmona, 2013b). Paid care workers are also put at risk of exploitation by employers if the facilities they are expected to work in are poor quality and work conditions are sub-standard. Research from Bangladesh found that some childcare facilities offered to garment factory employees were low quality, not trusted by employees, and in some cases were used as storage rooms (Work and Opportunities for Women (WOW), 2019b). This severely limited parents' uptake of these services. In addition, there have been accusations that an on-site health clinic in the Tesla Assembly Factory in California, United States, is unsafe and unethical, denying medical care and work restrictions to injured workers. This is despite the health clinic being credited with a 10% reduction in workplace absences (Evans, 2018). To promote high standard childcare in Sri Lanka, the government has adopted the National Guidelines on Child Day Care Centers, (Ministry of Women and Child Affairs and Dry Zone Development, 2019), while in India, the National Minimum Guidelines for Setting up and Running Creches was adopted in 2018 (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2018). Guidelines such as these set the standards for, among other things: staff qualifications and ratios; physical environment; health and safety; care, learning and play; health and safety, and for ensuring children's rights.



Promoting legal reform that supports paid parental and adoption leave and flexible working to make workplaces more conducive for workers with caring responsibilities. The World Policy Analysis Centre finds that paid parental leave is feasible across low- to high-income countries. Despite this, less than 50% of low-income countries, 53% of middle-income countries, and just over 75% of high-income countries currently guarantee paid leave for mothers with infants for a minimum of 14 weeks (Grantham et al., 2021). This leaves large numbers of women without adequate maternity protection and other social protection such as maternal and child healthcare. In 2017, this was the case for 830 million women, the majority of whom live in Africa and Asia (OECD, 2019b). In addition, in 2016, only 32 out of 184 countries provided paternity leave for at least two weeks to fathers (Coffey et al., 2020a). This lack of paternity leave exacerbates the disproportionate levels of childcare borne by mothers. Furthermore, in many contexts, parental leave is only available for employees in formal employment and do not cover part-time workers, informally employed workers, and

self-employed individuals, many of whom are women, with paid parental leave (Grantham et al., 2021).

Flexible work arrangements such as part time work, job-sharing, working from home, reduced hours etc. can help families manage UCDW needs. IMF analysis has found that flexible work arrangements contribute to redistributing unpaid work between men and women (Alonso et al., 2019). However, there is also some evidence that flexible working arrangements can contribute to reinforcing gender norms relating to care work and can expand the time women spend on UCDW (Chung & van der Lippe, 2020). There is probably a strong element of country social and policy context attached to these contradictory findings. The IMF, based on data from a number of high-income economies, finds that efficient labour markets with stronger labour market regulations and equal pay policies contribute to reduced unpaid work for women (Alonso et al., 2019).

Investments in quality care services

Investments in quality care services are key to ensuring women are not forced to take on heavy UCDW workloads, at the expense of economic and other opportunities. Modelling by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) finds that public investment in the care economy contributes to increases in GDP and in both men's and women's employment, with a larger impact on women's employment. The care economy employs a higher share of women than men, hence as the care economy (health care, social care, education, and childcare) grows, more women are employed in the sector. The work, though important is often undervalued and so wages are often low (Onaran & Oyvatt, 2023). Increases in public spending in the care economy also redistributes the costs of UCDW from low-income and socially excluded families and enables unpaid carers to pursue other options should they so wish. A 1% increase in spending in the care economy over 8 selected countries⁷ was estimated to result in a 11% increase in GDP as well as 6.3% increase in total employment levels (Onaran & Oyvatt, 2023). Actions the public sector has taken to support investments in quality care services include:



Funding quality childcare services to increase mothers' access to better employment opportunities: Research shows that in countries where childcare support is provided by the state through direct provision or subsidies, 30% of women are engaged in paid employment, compared to 12% in countries where no support is provided (Coffey et al., 2020). In Brazil, the provision of places at day-care in Rio de Janeiro through a lottery system significantly bolstered women's employment by 27%, and reduced unemployment by 8% for mothers whose children had places (Paes de Barros et al., 2011). In a study in Vietnam, childcare expansion resulted in increased wage and formal employment compared to self-employment, longer hours of paid work, and higher income (Dang et al., 2019).



Funding quality schooling that corresponds with parents' working hours to help women engage in paid employment (Sepulveda Carmona, 2013). Statistical modelling by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) finds that the gap between women and men's labour force participation would fall from 21 percentage points to 6.8 percentage points if governments increased their expenditure on pre-primary education to 1.5% of total GDP (Gammage et al., 2019b). Research in Indonesia found that additional public preschool per 1,000 children, raised the employment of mothers of eligible aged children by 13%. The same study found that private preschools, costing more on average and with greater variability of quality, had no impact on women's employment (Halim et al., 2018).

⁷ Indonesia, South Korea, South Africa, The Philippines, Turkey, India, Colombia, and Chile.



Funding quality long-term elder care and care for people living with disabilities. The number of older people is increasing in all regions of the world. The population of people over 65 is expected to double from 727 million people in 2020 to 1.5 billion in 2050 (UN, 2020). Older persons in Asia-Pacific (people over 60 years) comprised 13.6% of the population in 2020. This is projected to rise to 24.9% in 2050 (ESCAP, 2022). Older people, especially older women, are net providers of unpaid care, for example caring for children who are net consumers of care. Moreover, around 80% of people living with disabilities live in low and middle-income countries (LMICs) (WHO, 2011). Long term care of older people, and people living with disabilities, is largely performed as unpaid care (ESCAP, 2020). However, as more women enter the paid workforce and dependency ratios increase, it is also likely that the demand for quality long term care for elders and people living with disabilities will increase. Investing in publicly funded health-care provision will help to keep an aging population healthy for longer, reducing both costs and unpaid care workloads. Providing specialist training for more paid carers will help families and unpaid carers (ESCAP, 2020).

Investments in social protection programmes

Women’s responsibilities for unpaid care work, especially women from low-income households, makes them vulnerable to exclusion from social protection programmes. Well-designed social protection programmes can recognise the role of unpaid carers and help to redistribute the costs of and responsibility for providing UCDW. Types of social protection that recognise UCDW include pensions, tax rebates, cash-for care, cash transfers, and some public works programmes (Oxfam, 2021). Actions the public sector can, and is, taking to support social protection programmes that reflect the needs of unpaid carers include⁸:



Reducing the gender gap in pensions due to unpaid care provision: Heavy UCDW workloads undertaken by women means women are more likely to be in informal paid work than men, and that the number of hours of formal work and years of insured employment is more limited for women. Globally, only 26.4% of working age women are covered by a contributory pension scheme, and women account for nearly 65% of people above the retirement age without a regular pension (Coffey et al., 2020). The gender gap in pensions can be mitigated by providing universal non-contributory pension schemes that recognise women’s lower access to formal employment and their role in the informal economy and unpaid care work (Coffey et al., 2020). Bangladesh, Nepal, Thailand the Philippines, and Vietnam are among countries in the Asia Pacific region that have non-contributory (social) pensions in place, although not necessarily universal (UNESCAP, 2022). In Latin America, the number of countries providing non-contributory pensions increased from 6 in 2000 to 15 in 2017. In Bolivia, Mexico and Chile, these schemes are universal (FIAP, 2022).



Designing cash transfer and cash for care programmes that reflect the needs of unpaid carers: An increasing body of evidence demonstrates how cash transfer programmes that are conditional on children’s health and education have often increased the amount of UCDW carried out by women, have reinforced gender norms and done little to help women into employment (Sepulveda Carmona, M. 2018). This is because these programmes often have specific expectations that mothers take steps to ensure that the conditions for children’s health and education, are met. A study in Ecuador, for example, found that poor women who were recipients of the conditional cash transfers engaged in 37 hours a week of UCDW compared to an average of 30 hours per week for poor women who were not recipients. Cash

⁸ The following is not a conclusive list. A forthcoming note on UCDW and social protection will cover a broader range of programmes including social protection programmes that meet the needs of people living with disabilities and their families and help to reduce the expectation for family care and increase the inclusion and empowerment of people living with disabilities.

transfer programmes should avoid conditionality and take into account the gender patterns with regard to division of paid work and UCDW (Sepulveda Carmona, 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic provided momentum for the development of social protection programmes in several countries, including the use of mobile phone and digital finance to make transfers of payments easier, reducing time and costs needed for travel to collect payments (World Bank 2021). The examples above highlight the need for careful monitoring and evaluation to identify and address any unintended consequences of programmes for time spent on UCDW and how it is allocated.

Private sector initiatives to support the redistribution of UCDW:

The private sector is also in a unique position to support the redistribution of UCDW. This is beneficial beyond a company's 'social impact', with evidence that redistributing care responsibility or reducing domestic tasks of workers can reduce burnout, increase productivity, improve worker retention, increase consumer support, and increase profits. Examples of what the private sector is doing include:



Introducing workplace policies that support the redistribution of the costs and responsibility of UCDW. Policies and practices, including paid parental leave for mothers and fathers, on-site childcare or childcare benefits, flexible and part-time working can help employees (and in particular women) to manage their paid and unpaid work responsibilities while reducing staff turn-over and increasing productivity (Oxfam & Unilever, 2019a). A study with US firms found that 70% of companies offering improved leave policies (including but not limited to parental, sick leave and compassionate leave) reported an increase in worker productivity (Fuller & Raman, 2019). Focus groups of workers or surveys can identify which policies and practices are more important for those with caring responsibilities, and thus more effective in increasing productivity and retention. (Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI), n.d.; Pionetti, C et al, 2023 forthcoming)

Box 3: Practical Examples of Private-Sector Engagement

Nalt Enterprise, a garment manufacturer in Vietnam introduced on-site childcare which reduced staff turnover by one third. This helped avoid the high costs of replacing a factory worker, which amounts to an estimated 85% of an annual salary. Furthermore, in Brazil, Pandurata Alimentos Ltda, found factory workers were experiencing multiple accidents due to the stress associated with a lack of safe childcare. As a result, they introduced childcare benefits, which helped workers access childcare which reduced accident rates because employees became more focused and at ease knowing their children were safe (International Finance Corporation (IFC), 2017a). In Japan, the Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ Ltd. faced a high turnover of women staff when they became new mothers. To address this, they introduced an additional 12 month unpaid, job protected parental leave on top of the partially paid job-protected leave required by law and offered childcare support in the form of childcare subsidies, childcare leave, and assistance in finding childcare. This increased the retention of new mothers by 400%, saving the company USD\$45 million (International Finance Corporation (IFC), 2017b).



Investing in innovative workplace initiatives to address domestic work. On-site factory grocery shops can potentially reduce the time women (and men) spend on grocery shopping, a key component of UCDW, especially when transport is a challenge. Research by the WOW programme, in partnership with Primark, found that some larger garment factories in

Bangladesh provide employees with a card for buy groceries on credit from a shop on factory premises (Work and Opportunities for Women (WOW), 2019a).



Collaborations with other actors to improve care-facilitating public services and infrastructure: The social enterprise, Water and Sanitation for the Urban Poor (WSUP), has partnered with the Coca Cola Foundation and the Ghana Water Company Limited to build a large, elevated tank, 75 standpipes, and over 15,000 metres of pipes across communities in Ghana. This infrastructure connected households to the water supply, eliminating the time and effort required to walk for water collection. The project also established Community Management Committees which gave local women and men authority to operate, maintain and manage this infrastructure, and to report monthly water sales. (Oxfam & Unilever, 2019b).



Designing innovative products that can combine a reduction in UCDW with core business objectives. Unilever has introduced a new technology called SmartFoam in its handwash detergent bars and laundry powders in India (with the brand Rin), and in the Sunlight 2-in-1 handwashing laundry powder in South Africa. SmartFoam cuts the number of rinses needed to wash away foam by up to half, which benefits the environment and reduces the time women spend on laundry and collecting water (Oxfam & Unilever, 2019a). In addition, British International Investment, in partnership with M-KOPA, a provider of pay-as-you-go financing for solar appliances, has explored investments in off-grid refrigeration. While the potential to reduce women’s unpaid care was enormous, take-up was slow, largely due to financial barriers for low-income households (Sanni & Neureiter, 2019) .



Working with supply chains to scale innovative private sector practice. UCDW does not only affect a business’s own employees but also the workforce of its suppliers. Companies that encourage employers in their supply chain to address UCDW issues can help build stable and diverse sources of supply, contributing to their ability to mitigate risk and meet customer demand, improving the resilience of supply chains (2X Global, 2023; International Labour Organization (ILO), 2020; Oxfam & Unilever, 2019a). For example, Martur, a car component manufacturer in Turkey, reduced staff turnover by 15% by offering childcare-related benefits (International Finance Corporation (IFC), 2017). However, data collection on UCDW in supply chains, such as the collaboration between WOW and Primark (Work and Opportunities for Women (WOW), 2019a) is still rare. Guidance such as the Ethical Trading Initiative’s Gender Data Initiative, is being piloted and presents an opportunity for international companies to improve policies on UCDW (Ethical Trading Initiative, n.d.)



Exploring opportunities to engage in gender-lens investing that considers UCDW. The iCare Benefits Groups is a retail focused social enterprise enabling manufacturers to serve low-income factory workers in Cambodia and Lao with low-cost products including home appliances and electronics that help save time on housework. A range of Development Finance Institutions (DFIs) and impact investors have invested in the company (iCare Benefits Group, n.d.). 2X Global has developed a new brief helping investors understand which care businesses are attracting investment, and why investors should pay attention (2X Global, 2023). The Care Economy Knowledge Hub, part of IDRC’s Transforming the Care Economy consortia, aims to fill the knowledge gap about private investment into businesses supporting UCDW (*The Care Economy Knowledge Hub*, n.d.). In Senegal, the gender-lens investing fund Enterprises that Change Lives (ECV, for its title in Spanish) has supported Institut Academique des Bebes (IAB) a new business model to open nurseries in communities without few or no access to baby care services. This demonstrates the potential to foster gender equality and address UCDW innovatively (*The Care Economy Knowledge Hub*, n.d.). However, DFIs have been, in general, “somewhat blind to the question of women’s unpaid work” (Espinoza

Trujano & Lévesque, 2022). Gender-lens investment products remain limited in scope. More than 50% of all public gender lens investment products focus on women in leadership, typically defined as a proportion of women on boards, women in C-suite positions and women in senior management (Fish, n.d.). Guidance on gender-smart investing has paid insufficient attention to unpaid care, yet innovative companies are demonstrating the potential of these investments. (ICare Benefits Group, n.d.).



Supporting the development of cooperatives for childcare among informal workforces.

Globally, 58% of women work in the informal economy, and rising to 92% in low-income countries (Bonnet et al., 2019). This vast informally employed workforce has no access to work-based social protection or other benefits associated with formal workplaces. Consequently, many women in the informal economy bring their children to work with implications for productivity, child safety and development (Grantham & Somji, 2022). Several models have emerged to provide people care, including social franchising models largely focused on childcare, while supporting female entrepreneurs (such as Kidogo and Tiny Totos in East Africa) or cooperatives (International Labour Organization, 2017) such as the Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) in India or the Unorganised Vendors and Traders Cooperate in Makola Market in Accra, Ghana (Grantham & Somji, 2022). There is a clear role for donor support or private sector incubation. Moreover, cooperatives can be a space to raise awareness about care needs and to collectively negotiate for public provision of care services (International Labour Organization (ILO) & Women in Informal Employment, 2018). Barriers to accessing services remain, including high fees, limited operating hours, distance and quality care. At the same time, some of these initiatives, in particular the franchises, are highly dependent on donors and philanthropy, raising questions around sustainability if funding is withdrawn. The sustainability and reliability of childcare services is critical for both unpaid carers and their children, pointing to the importance of long-term planning.



Utilising brands and advertising to shift social norms around UCDW.

While gender roles are changing, including on UCDW, data shows that advertising is lagging behind. Survey data with a panel of US consumers shows that 30% of 1,000 respondents from a mix of age groups, genders, ethnicities, regions, incomes and urbanisation levels feel that brands misrepresent them and their gender (Marketing Charts, 2018). At the same time, both women and men continue to be portrayed in traditional and stereotyped ways (#Unstereotype Alliance, 2022). Companies are in a unique position to take a transformative approach to addressing UCDW by using advertising to promote a more equitable distribution of UCDW within household (Oxfam & Unilever, 2019b). For example, Indesit, a manufacturer of household appliances, launched the campaign #DoItTogether, to encourage households to share domestic chores fairly. This included images of fathers teaching their sons how to use appliances, helping to shape norms related to UCDW from a young age. Similarly, P&G’s Ariel India, a laundry detergent brand, launched the #ShareTheLoad campaign, to encourage men to share laundry responsibilities. This campaign not only supported social norm change across India, but it also helped grow Ariel’s sales by 75% year-on-year, which was double the target (see Box 5)(Getmemedia, n.d.). In addition, Unilever’s Dove Men+ Care, a male cosmetic brand, launched a campaign to encourage uptake of paternity leave for men everywhere. The industry-led [#Unstereotype Alliance](#), convened by UN Women, was established to change perceptions and challenge stereotypes, based on gender or other forms of identity.

Box 4: Ariel India's "Sons Share the Load" campaign.

In 2017, Ariel launched a premium detergent, "Ariel Matic", across India. (Getmemedia, n.d.) Faced with high competition from rival brands, Ariel decided to attempt to increase its target audience to include men by asking the question "why can't a man do the washing?". Through the campaign, Ariel launched video adverts exclaiming that it was time for men to "SHARE THE LOAD". These video adverts were watched more than 50 million times globally in just 50 days. In stores, Ariel released "His and Her" custom laundry packs and on social media they asked men to show their commitment by taking part in a "wash bucket challenge" and posting photos of them doing laundry. More than 2 million Indian men publicly pledged to do the laundry. In addition to contributing to social norms change across India, sales for Ariel grew by 75% year-on-year which was double the target.

Social norms change initiatives can support the redistribution of UCDW:

Social and gender norms can change over time and with economic development. Research by the IMF shows that while women undertake most of the care work in all countries, the amount of time men spend on UCDW increases in higher-income countries (Alonso et al., 2019). On average, men in higher-income countries spend twice as much time as men in low- and middle-income countries on UCDW and also increase the amount of time spent on domestic chores (Alonso et al 2019). Social Norms, Attitudes and Practices surveys⁹ of urban millennials in Vietnam, Indonesia, and Philippines uncovered attitudes that challenged the prevailing gender norms. Around half of the men and a third of the women surveyed said that they shared the housework equally. Even accounting for limitations of self-reported perceptions, this indicates a positive trend (Investing in Women, 2019).

Actions the public and private sector are taking to support social norm change include:



Reframing public narratives around unpaid care and domestic work, driving changes in norms and perceptions towards more equitable distribution of UCDW. Efforts to increase investment in services and infrastructure that would reduce UCDW are often undermined by unconstructive public narratives of unpaid care as "low value" and "light" work. These narratives stem from the perceptions of UCDW as 'helping' rather than work, inconsequential, unskilled, 'low value', 'petty' and 'light' work (Samman, 2018b). Redistribution of UCDW relies on a shift in these norms and narratives towards UCDW as valuable and skilled work. Similarly, referring to UCDW as a 'public good', rather than a 'burden', increases awareness that UCDW is critical to our social and economic wellbeing. Men and boys are more likely to want to learn how to carry out domestic tasks and share responsibility for caring when UCDW is describe as a 'good' rather than a 'burden' (Chopra & Krishnan, 2022a; Parkes, 2021).



Investing in creative and context-specific initiatives to help instil a male ethic of care among boys. Boys who are encouraged to do UCDW in the home as children, and those who see their fathers or other men in their household carry out UCDW, are more likely to take responsibility for caregiving as adults (Kato-Wallace et al., 2014). Programmes have successfully engaged boys and men to understand masculinity as creating healthy relationships with equitable sharing of responsibility for care (Kato-Wallace et al., 2016). However, affecting the structural change needed for this, requires engaging all of those involved in the socialization of boys – teachers, parents, other family members, coaches, youth workers, childcare workers, and

⁹ Survey participants included 1,000 women and 1,000 men aged between 18 and 40 in urban areas in each of the countries.

those who make media content that boys and young men consume (Barker, Garg, et al., 2021). Program P engages new fathers and their partners via health, social protection, workplace and community groups. In Rwanda, a randomised control trial found that after two years participating, men spent almost an hour a day more on UCDW and were about half as likely to use violence with partners (Equimundo, n.d.). After two decades of research and training with men and adolescents through Program P (for fathers) and Program H (young men), Equimundo and the Kering Foundation launched the Global Boyhood Initiatives. With Plan International and corporate partner Gillette, the programme involves boys aged 4 to 13 with the adults in their lives, to embrace a healthy masculinity and gender equality (Equimundo and Plan International, 2020; Equimundo, 2002).



DURING THE LAST THREE DECADES, THE GAP BETWEEN WOMEN'S AND MEN'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO UNPAID CARE WORK GLOBALLY NARROWED BY ONLY SEVEN MINUTES PER DAY.

(Addati et al., 2018)

6. Representing unpaid carers and domestic workers

It is essential that unpaid carers and domestic workers are included in the design and decision-making of policy and programmes across the public and private sector. This representation helps ensure the needs of unpaid carers and domestic workers are reflected in the decisions that affect them and increasing the user uptake and sustainability of infrastructure. There is a significant gap in evidence around the representation of unpaid carers and domestic workers. Most evidence on representing carers in policy dialogue and programme design is about paid carers, focused on formalising work, protecting care worker rights, improving working conditions and ensuring their freedom of association (UN Women, 2022). This section helps fill this gap, focusing on promoting the representation of unpaid carers and providing examples of how to amplify their voices to decision-makers:



Including unpaid carers in decision-making, ensuring their expertise in this area is recognised and valued, helps to make their priorities for spending visible. Existing literature rarely articulates the importance of including female unpaid carers in decision-making around water supply, toilets, healthcare, education, or public transport, to ensure these initiatives meet their needs. Infrastructure has traditionally been a heavily male-dominated sector, leaving women, and especially women with UCDW responsibilities, little or no voice in investment decisions that affect their economic opportunities and well-being. The inclusion of unpaid carers in decision-making allows them to express different sets of priorities for the allocation of public resources, including on access to basic infrastructure (OECD, 2021). At local levels, studies on the influence of women’s quotas in the panchayats (village councils) in India, have illustrated the impact of women in decision-making on community preferences. Analysis of 265 village councils in West Bengal and Rajasthan found that reservations for women as council leaders affected the types of public goods provided as leaders invest more in infrastructure that is directly relevant to the needs of their own gender (Chattopadhyay & Duflo, 2004). Women are, however, not a homogenous group and, while the majority of unpaid carers are women, not all women have disproportionate UCDW responsibilities. The “add women and stir” approach should be avoided, and instead actively include unpaid carers in decision-making processes.



Supporting grassroots women’s organisations and cooperatives working with women from low-income households to articulate their UCDW needs and priorities. In India, the Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) advocates on behalf of its members to hold the state accountable for supporting women’s UCDW and has successfully lobbied for parental leave and expansion of childcare (Zaidi et al., 2017). Other examples of grassroots organisations mobilising support for UCDW include the efforts of the Asmare Waste Pickers Cooperative in Brazil, who successfully advocated for childcare services, and the Ghana Association of Traders, who took over a poorly run childcare centre operated by the Accra Municipal Government and ran it themselves (Moussié, 2017). Mahila Housing SEWA Trust (MHT) in India organised informally employed homeworkers to collaborate with local government bodies to improve sanitation, water and solid waste management services. Research found that homeworkers reduced time spent on water collection and illness of themselves and their children and increased their productivity and incomes.



Using diplomatic and advocacy channels to amplify the voices of unpaid carers. Oxfam has drawn attention to UCDW through research, policy advocacy, toolkits and incorporating it into programmes on the ground (León-Himmelstine & Salomon, 2020). In addition, Action Aid has helped local civil society organisations engage with local and national governments in Nigeria

and Nepal to advocate successfully for expansion of childcare as part of their focus on unpaid care work (Chopra et al., 2014). Further, Christian Blind Mission (CBM), an organisation of people with disabilities, works with local partners to empower them in advocacy and has programmes that bring carers of and people with disabilities together to develop and advocate for approaches to redistributing unpaid care work (CBM, 2019). In each case the advocacy and engagement by, and with support from, civil society is influencing policy makers to think differently and make changes.

Using evidence to support advocacy for improved policy and public investment in the care economy. The International Trade Union Congress (ITUC) has undertaken analytical work that makes a robust case for increased investment in the care economy. The ITUC also organised an International Day of Action on Care and highlighted the advocacy of worldwide trade union movements for policies and investment in care. In addition to demonstrating the importance and extent of unpaid care, the ITUC and trade unions argue for more paid jobs in care and better conditions for paid care workers (Onaran & Oyvatt, 2023).



**GIRLS SPEND 40%
MORE TIME ON
UNPAID CARE WORK
THAN BOYS.** (UNICEF, 2022)

7. Resilience: Unpaid care in times of crisis

Climate change, and economic, political, or public health shocks, often increase the amount and challenge of UCDW. Climate change is triggering extreme weather events such as floods, droughts, heatwaves, and cyclones all of which can destroy homes and facilities, reduce availability of food and clean water, and make the challenge of managing UCDW arduous and time-consuming. Economic, political and public health shocks can reduce access to services and infrastructure that make UCDW more manageable. Combined with other stresses such as surges in domestic violence, job losses and economic stress, this increase in UCDW can lead to severe deteriorations in mental and physical health, especially among women (Barker, Heilman, et al., 2021). In addition, government responses to crises are often insensitive to or ignore UCDW demands. In some cases, governments exploit women's unpaid care work, especially during crisis assuming that women will fill the gaps in public services. Research examining government policy responses during COVID-19 across 59 countries in Asia and the Pacific found that fewer than 30% of measures were care-sensitive¹⁰ (Chopra & Krishnan, 2022b).

Climate change and the future of care

There is a growing body of evidence that climate change increases the amount of UCDW needs, and exacerbates the time and energy required to carry out UCDW. However, most of this evidence focuses on the impact of water scarcity on UCDW. Water scarcity is only one example of a myriad of challenges that the climate change-UCDW nexus brings. More research is needed to fully understand these links (Macgregor et al., n.d.).

Increasingly scarce resources will result in women walking longer distances to collect water and fuel. It is estimated that by 2025, as many as 2.4 billion people will live in areas without enough clean water to survive, meaning the distances needed to collect water will increase significantly (Coffey et al., 2020a). Increase risk of flooding has the potential to pollute water supplies, while droughts will cause water sources to dry up, and rising sea levels will lead to water salination. In Somalia, some women's workload doubled as a result of drought, travelling up to 10km in search of firewood and water (Oxfam, 2019).

Water pollution and temperature changes will result in higher levels of sickness within households, leading to more care responsibilities. Research from the Occupied Palestinian Territories finds that sudden fluctuations in temperature, linked to climate change, have increased levels of illness within households, which has increased UCDW (Abu Meziad et al., 2019). With as much as 70% of the world's extreme poor depending on rainfall for food production, studies predict that climate change will lead to agricultural collapse and food scarcity (IDS et al., 2015b). This is likely to cause malnutrition, stunting and compromised immune systems, leading to increased illness (Coffey et al., 2020a). Rises in temperature are expected to exacerbate risks of malaria, diarrhoea and heat stress, which associated higher UCDW loads.

Climate change is a driver of migration although most migrants are able-bodied young men and women wait longer to migrate because of the social costs and risks. Migration can thus change household composition of those that remain and increase the number of female heads of household who take on greater workloads. While some may become more vulnerable, there is also some

¹⁰ This study defines "care-sensitive policy measures" as any policy that directly addresses care work. This included policies such as childcare assistance, care for older persons, care for people who were sick, food assistance, utility bill waivers/ deferrals, parental leave, and flexible working policies. Policies such as social insurance, utility bill exceptions or waivers to enterprises, unemployment benefits, social assistance like cash transfers were not included as they were not considered to have a direct impact on UCDW.

evidence that changes in the gendered division of paid work and UCDW could enhance women's agency and economic freedom (IPCC, 2022).

Climate action itself can increase the weight and inequitable distribution of UCDW when it is not designed with UCDW in mind. Action Aid has highlighted how regional and national policies in South Asia, including on climate adaptation, have failed to integrate unpaid care work considerations and impacts (Action Aid, 2018). Oxfam's report "Caring in a changing climate: centring care work in climate action" (MacGregor et al., 2022) highlights the risk of failing to consider women's workloads of unpaid care and productive work within climate action.

The potential of climate action to address UCDW.

Climate action has the potential to address UCDW through shifts to a green economy. Two key examples of this potential are detailed below:

- 1. Finding win-wins for UCDW and Climate Action:** One example of a potential win-win for UCDW and Climate Action is the introduction of clean cookstoves (IGC, 2022). Time use data from India in 2019 found that only 6.1% of men participate in cooking, compared to almost all women in rural areas. This puts women at greater health risks due to pollution from cookstoves. Women are also primarily responsible for collecting fuel, which can require them to walk long distances. Cook stoves that use cleaner energy fuels such as Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) cookstoves, can reduce the time needed for cooking and fuel collection, and reduce the risk of health issues caused by indoor air pollution.
- 2. Shifts among sectors that primarily employ women:** There is substantial pressure on sectors such as garment manufacturers to shift to more sustainable working practices. In addition, new jobs are likely to emerge such as those in recycling, and regenerative agriculture. There is an opportunity for UCDW activists to collaborate with climate activists to promote shifts in working practices that are both more environmentally sustainable and gender equitable, so that they also recognise and address UCDW among employees. These include reducing overtime that puts pressure on UCDW, and developing more sustainable water-use practices, to address the impact of corporate water-consumption on water availability for households.

The impact of political, economic, public health shocks, and natural disasters on unpaid care

Political, economic and public health shocks such as the outbreak of armed conflict, economic recessions, and public health shocks such as COVID-19, Ebola and HIV can significantly increase the amount of UCDW required by households and communities. This is linked to closure of services and movement restrictions.

Closure of services

The closure of schools and childcare facilities, increasing the need for at-home childcare: Severe shocks often cause schools to close due to safety concerns for children and staff, along with a lack of economic resources to keep them open. During the COVID-19 pandemic, almost 90% of countries globally closed their schools, affecting 1.5 billion children and increasing the volume and intensity of childcare needed within households (Grantham et al., 2021). In 2021, in most countries the time women spent on childcare increased by 34% to an average of over 30 hours per week. Similar patterns can be found in conflict settings, with 25 million children between the ages of 6 and 15 across conflict zones out of school during 2017, accounting for 22% of children of that age group (UNICEF, 2017). In South Sudan, almost 72% of children were out of school. In Chad 50% of children were in school and in Afghanistan the figure was 46%. Natural disasters such as earthquakes also lead to long-term school closures, with similar UCDW consequences for households (University of Oxford, 2020).

Reduced access to elder care support: Women of all ages provide the majority of elder care globally, the need for which often increases during times of crisis (UN Women, 2020). During the COVID-19 pandemic the amount of care needed for older people increased significantly, as risks of contagion reduced their ability to frequent public spaces. The risk of contagion also increased the complexity of providing elder care, with women having to manage the risk of contagion associated with their other UCDW responsibilities. Similar patterns can be expected in times of conflict and natural disasters.

Closure of or reduced access to health services: Women often take on increased care responsibilities for sick relatives when severe shocks lead to the closure of health services or when there are increases in demand for health services that they cannot withstand. This has been widely documented in countries severely affected by HIV/AIDS, where there is need for long-term care, combined with a lack of access to health services (Macgregor et al., n.d.). This has caused substantial political mobilisation around UCDW within Southern African countries. Similar patterns were identified during the COVID-19 pandemic, with women across the world taking time off work to care for sick family members (The Times, 2022).

Movement restrictions

Conflict and severe shocks can cause the destruction of infrastructure and breakdown of transportation services: Research in South Sudan highlighted the impact of armed conflict on the destruction of roads, limiting the ability of individuals to use cars, buses and trains (Nyanga et al., 2019). Furthermore, globally, governments introduced travel restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic to manage the risk of infection. For example, in India, transport authorities modified seating arrangements on public transport, reducing the seating capacity of public transport by half (Naveen & Gurtoo, 2021). These restrictions disproportionately impact women, who rely more heavily on public transport to move around than men (International Transport Forum, 2021). By reducing access to public transport, severe shocks increase the time and energy required for women to carry out UCDW.

Curfews mean that higher levels of UCDW must be carried out during shorter time periods. The COVID-19 pandemic saw the introduction of curfews in many countries. In Greece, curfews did not reduce the amount of time people were in grocery stores but instead intensified the number of people going to grocery stores during shorter time periods (Velias et al., 2022). This is likely to have increased the risk of infection for people carrying out this work. It may also have required them to spend more time planning their days to fit their UCDW responsibilities around these movement restrictions, requiring further time and resulting in stress.

Movement restrictions can prevent paid care and domestic workers from supporting their clients. Research from by the National Domestic Workers Alliance, found that by mid-March 2020, 93% of the 2 million domestic workers in the US had lost their jobs due to movement restrictions linked to the COVID-19 pandemic (Leachman, 2021). Similar trends can be seen across the world from Uganda (Nantongo, 2020), to Argentina, where 433,000 domestic workers lost their jobs between the first quarter of 2020 and the first quarter of 2021 - almost twice the number of jobs lost in hotels and restaurants (Camisassa & Sachetti, 2022). This not only had severe consequences for the livelihoods of paid domestic and care workers globally, but also reduced the support available to households who employed them, increasing time spent on UCDW for women.

Severe shocks can increase safety risks associated with movement, compromising the safety of women engaging in UCDW outside of the home. During the COVID-19 pandemic, where movement restrictions reduced the number of people out in public, there was heightened risk of sexual violence and street harassment for women outside of their homes. Anecdotal evidence from Colombia found that due to COVID-19 related movement restrictions, 1 out of 10 people walking in the streets were women (Perez, 2020). The lack of women on the streets compared to men led women to feel more isolated and at higher risk of sexual violence and harassment when carrying out UCDW such as grocery

shopping, even on short journeys that were usually considered “safe”. Similar patterns are found in contexts of armed conflict where roving armed groups make water and fuel collection exceedingly dangerous for women and girls, by exposing them to higher risk of ambush and sexual violence (Clugston & Spearing, 2020). In 2020, research by Oxfam in Burkina Faso found that women and girls are exposed to unprecedented risks of sexual violence and harassment by armed groups, especially in fields and at water points (Oxfam International, 2020).

Initiatives by governments, the private sector, civil society organisations, and women’s rights activists that help reduce the impact of political, economic, public health, and climatic shocks on UCDW:

Government actions include:



Raising awareness of the impact various shocks have on the amount of UCDW needed and the barriers to carrying this out. The recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change discusses UCDW in its 2023 report (IPCC 2023). This is a clear example of governments bringing the issue of UCDW to the attention of the international community making decisions around mitigation and adaptation to climate change.

The private sector is developing responses:



Developing flexible work and work from home policies. COVID-19 drew attention to the challenges and needs of balancing UCDW with paid work and triggered the development of various flexible work and work from home policies globally. However, these policies tend to primarily benefit those working in jobs that can be completed from home, which are held by individuals with reliable IT infrastructure. In many countries across the Global South, especially in rural areas, these jobs and the IT infrastructure needed to work from home is not available (World Bank, 2020).

Donors and civil society are producing a range of tools and initiatives:



Using datasets and remote sensing data to carry out gender responsive disaster assessments. The Asian Development Bank commissioned a gender-specific earthquake assessment in 2022 following a series of earthquakes in Indonesia, using administrative and satellite data (ADB, 2016). This assessment found that the economic welfare of the community generally improved in the medium-term, due to reconstruction work. However, it also found that the continued lack of access to basic resources such as water, fuel and sanitation, led to a decrease in women’s welfare because this prolonged their inability to carry out UCDW, a role that is expected of them due to social norms. This type of gender-specific assessment provide key information that can help ensure disaster response and recovery plans are tailored to the needs of diverse women.



Developing toolkits for various disasters that include recognition of UCDW. The Pacific Gender and Climate Change Toolkit, developed by the UN, is a key example of a toolkit that recognises and supports users to address UCDW (UN Women, 2015). For example, it highlights the importance of engaging men in sanitation programmes as well as women, to ensure that they understand at actively contribute to the management of water through household sanitation practices. It also highlights the need to ensure adaptation activities do not add to women’s workload related to UCDW.



Supporting local women’s rights organisations and activists campaigning to end GBV linked to unmanageable levels of UCDW in disaster contexts. In Mozambique, the prolonged

drought has caused some families to force girls to marry at a young age to reduce the numbers of mouths to feed, leading them into a lifetime of deprivation and taking on disproportionate loads of UCDW (UN Women, 2017). Local women have helped to mobilise communities, students and teachers and parents organisations, to raise awareness of the risks associated with child marriage in a bid to reduce this practice. This work has been supported by UN Women.

Women’s rights activists are mobilising, sometimes to fill gaps in donor and government funding, and sometimes supported by it:



In the Pacific the Shifting the Power coalition (StPC) was established after Cyclone Wilson in 2016 (UN Women, 2022c). This is a feminist coalition of diverse women led organisations working to shift the dialogue towards responses to climate-related crises. Intersectionality is part of what they do and their membership includes LGBTQ+ and disability rights groups. Their approach involves a focus on the linkages between the environment, food security, access to water, healthcare, and other key services.



In Port-au-Prince, Haiti, after Hurricane Matthew, local women-led groups created aid networks to address the immediate needs of women and children (The Wire, 2016). In recognition that women and girls are often the last to get the support they need following a disaster, these women-led groups focused their efforts on providing life-saving and essential services to women and girls in their communities such as healthcare, sanitary services, and access to clean water.



In Indonesia, local women-led organisations were essential to addressing the needs of women in their communities following the 2018 tsunami and earthquake. Women-led organisations established women-friendly spaces, identified the needs of women and girls, distributed essential non-food items, supported the re-establishment of schools, and provided shelter for affected communities (Parke, n.d.).

8. Opportunities and recommendations

FCDO advisers, and the government, private sector and civil society actors that they work with, have many opportunities to address heavy and unequal UCDW and improve economic, social and equity outcomes of their programmes. Broadly, there are four areas of recommendations: data, policies, investments, and social norms:

- First, collect sufficient context-specific data about UCDW workloads and how these affect the ability of carers, especially women, to participate or benefit from programmes, and economic development in general;
- Second, design and implement policies that address UCDW responsibilities, and avoid exacerbating UCDW workloads;
- Third, invest in infrastructure, equipment and services that facilitates care, or reduces the time- and labour-intensiveness of domestic tasks; and
- Fourth, ensure that communications portray UCDW as a valuable, public good, as skilled work, and as a shared responsibility – between women and men, and across families, businesses and state entities.

Sector-specific guidance is provided below (Table 1). In addition, the following principles or considerations can support FCDO programming across its portfolio of development interventions:

<p>FRAMING:</p> 	<p>Care must be recognised as both a universal human right and an essential building block for economic and social wellbeing and sustainable development. Unpaid care work should be recognized as work, and as skilled, and care provision recognised as a public (as opposed to a private) issue (UN Women, 2022). Domestic work is as critical as direct care for dependants, especially in areas of low- and middle-income countries where public services are inadequate.</p>
<p>INTERSECTIONALITY:</p> 	<p>Care work and care responsibilities affect women and men in different ways depending on their characteristics, for example, their gender, race, class, age, sexual orientation and gender identity, disability status, marital status, and migration status (UN Women, 2022). Heavy unpaid care workloads constrain education and livelihoods of girls and women, and rural, ethnic minority and people with disabilities, among others.</p>
<p>LANGUAGE:</p> 	<p>Unpaid care work is not just a ‘women’s issue’, it’s a poverty and development issue that can be championed by men, religious and political leaders across the world. Avoiding the use of language such as “burden” to describe care work can help improve recognition of the value of care to individuals, households, societies, and economies (UN Women, 2022).</p>












<p>DATA:</p> 	<p>Collect data on unpaid care work wherever possible, considering low-cost data that is quick to collect, wherever possible. Evidence and the process of collecting data can kick-start change processes. Patterns of unpaid care work differ town to farm, by sector, culture and country; collect context-specific data to design effective interventions.</p>
<p>DECISION-MAKING:</p> 	<p>Involve unpaid carers in the design of interventions and policy. Leaders, including women leaders, usually have delegated their unpaid care work to others and may not be up to date about the needs of those carrying out unpaid care.</p>
<p>COMPLEMENTARY INTERVENTIONS:</p> 	<p>Changes in government policies, in employer practices, investments in public services and shifts in social norms are all required to facilitate unpaid care and promote dynamic, healthy and equitable development. Single or technical 'solutions' for excessive and unequal workloads of unpaid care rarely work and can risk increasing time poverty for women and girls. Research shows that complementary interventions in technology, services and norms can achieve measurable, positive changes. (León-Himmelstine, C., & Salomon, H. (2020))</p>
<p>PARTNERSHIP:</p> 	<p>Governments in high-income countries are uniquely positioned to work with other governments, donor agencies and the private sector, through advocacy and public diplomacy to keep UCDW in the spotlight and work together to find solutions. As members of the United Nations these governments helped to establish global commitments on UCDW, including SDG 5.4 and the Global Alliance for Care, and their seat on the boards and contributions to multilateral development banks and agencies can ensure UCDW is integrated into policies and programmes. Their bilateral relationships with other governments provide the opportunity to highlight the importance of UCDW and supporting them to address it.</p>
<p>PROGRAMMING:</p> 	<p>Starting with country and sector strategies, UCDW needs to be visible and considered at all stages of programme design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. It needs to be included in economic and social analysis that form the basis of design. Specific issues need to be addressed through outcomes articulated in theories of change, results chains, and monitoring indicators. Interventions should specifically address the issues, ensuring that harmful norms are not reinforced, and women and children do not experience increased UCDW. Evaluations should include impact and unintended consequences on UCDW. Programme implementing partners can be encouraged to innovate address UCDW and gendered norms on care in context-specific ways and held accountable for meeting UCDW outcome indicator targets.</p>

Table 1: Sector-specific guidance to address the 5 Rs.

Sectors / 5Rs	Recommendations
Private sector (formal employment)	
 <i>Recognise</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Include information on unpaid care workloads in workplace surveys. Use survey and other instruments to Identify VAWG and sexual harassment. <input type="checkbox"/> Collect data about the positive (and negative) impact of policies on employees' care and domestic tasks, both intended and unintended.
 <i>Reduce</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Introduce workplace services or subsidies that facilitate domestic work (e.g., on-site shopping) <input type="checkbox"/> Support and invest in partners that develop equipment and technology that reduces time and resources required for domestic tasks (e.g., water, energy, cooking, washing, online services). <input type="checkbox"/> Invest in care service providers run by women-owned businesses and women entrepreneurs
 <i>Redistribute</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Introduce workplace policies that support carers and subsidise the costs of people-care (e.g., childcare, sick leave, parental leave). <input type="checkbox"/> Assume men (also) have responsibility for care and domestic tasks and ensure that workplace culture encourages and supports male employees to take parental leave or sick days to care for family members. <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure branding and advertising challenges gender stereotypes on unpaid care, portraying men doing UCDW. Portray UCDW as an important social good and a family activity, rather than a burden.
 <i>Represent</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Include a diverse group of workers in design of workplace policy to identify and meet their needs to provide unpaid care
 <i>Resilience</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Monitor and respond to changing unpaid care workloads for employees, in situations of conflict, climate disasters, pandemics and other shocks.
Economic Development Programmes	
 <i>Recognise</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Support international organisations or national statistics agencies to collect data on unpaid carers and unpaid care work in line with the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS19) <input type="checkbox"/> Engage in dialogue at international forums to promote progress on addressing UCDW (including meeting target SDG 5.4) <input type="checkbox"/> Engage in bilateral discussions with governments to highlight the economic benefits of addressing UCDW and ways to invest in it. <input type="checkbox"/> Promote the use of context-specific time-use studies to monitor women's and men's paid- and unpaid care work hours. <input type="checkbox"/> Support analysis that builds the business case for public and private investment in addressing UCDW. <input type="checkbox"/> Identify the risks of violence against women and girls (VAWG) as roles of paid work and UCDW change within households.



Reduce

- Ensure public budgets include allocations for programmes that reduce time in domestic work.
- Foster gender lens investment and increase investments into social enterprises and businesses that innovate to support unpaid carers



Redistribute

- Ensure public investment strategies and national development programmes articulate strategies, programmes and targets for supporting and investing in UCDW.
- Encourage and assist governments to develop care strategies covering both paid and unpaid care work.
- Ensure programmes include complementary interventions to shift gendered norms about UCDW, and to address violence against women and girls.
- Promote franchising models or investment or subsidies for people care services, through cooperatives



Represent

- Inform policy development and programme designs through consultation with unpaid carers and informally employed workers' groups about care needs.
- Use diplomatic and advocacy channels to amplify the voices of unpaid carers and their organisations, using evidence to support improved policy and public investment, both in infrastructure and public services to facilitate UCDW.



Resilience

- Ensure policy, programmes and budgets for climate adaptation, emergency response, and disaster recovery have fully integrated and respond to UCDW and carer needs

Infrastructure



Recognise

- Support data collection and analysis to build evidence-based rationale for investing in infrastructure to address heavy UCDW.
- Collect data on transport for care trips, as well as commuting; on water collection and use for domestic work as well as for production; raise awareness of potential impacts on UCDW when promoting household electricity connections. Monitor the time-use of unpaid carers using public services, including water, energy, care services and transport, to evaluate benefits of services in reducing time poverty of unpaid carers.
- Include UCDW in national development and sector specific strategies (e.g., WASH, electricity, health, education) and policies and ensure that budgets are allocated.



Reduce

- Invest in water infrastructure that reduces the time and distance to collect water, and electricity infrastructure to increase access to time-saving technology for UCDW and to (public health) communications.
- Invest in or subsidize the production and distribution of time-and labour-saving equipment, e.g., improved stoves and laundry devices.



Redistribute

- Invest in interventions to shift gendered norms on care work and ensure that they are essential components of infrastructure projects,
- Ensure women are not restricted by UCDW in accessing economic opportunities in infrastructure programmes by providing e.g., childcare, public services and flexible work arrangements.

- Develop guidelines for considering UCDW in infrastructure projects such as water and sanitation, transport, and electricity.
- Develop guidelines and regulations for urban and residential development, social housing, etc that consider needs of unpaid carers (e.g., for mobility and access to services).



Represent

- Actively promote the participation of women who carry out UCDW in the design of inclusive and care-sensitive public infrastructure investments. Ensure women's involvement in design and control over infrastructure *and* use the process to shift norms towards men taking greater responsibility for care, water and washing.



Resilience

- Ensure climate change adaptation, emergency response, and disaster recovery programmes prioritise infrastructure that supports the needs of unpaid carers.
- Develop guidelines for implementers of disaster response and emergency programmes for integrating UCDW in programmes.

Publicly funded care services



Recognise

- Ensure UCDW is included in the collection of national statistics and in the design of national budgets.
- Prepare evidence-based and costed strategies and action plans to improve the provision of publicly funded care services.



Reduce

- Ensure care services are available and accessible to carers without adding undue travel time and costs



Redistribute

- Redistribute costs of UCDW from (low-income) families to public sector by investing public funds into high quality and affordable childcare, eldercare, and care for people with disabilities.
- Provide skills training and ensure decent pay and working conditions for paid care workers.
- Regulate the private sector care providers to ensure high quality services.
- Introduce laws and policies (parental leave etc.) to shift norms and ensure public sector communications and curriculums portray a diversity of men and women in caring roles (e.g., children's health posters; cooking).



Represent

- Involve unpaid and paid carers, especially women, in the development of relevant strategies, action plans, and designs. Actively involve fathers.



Resilience

- Design public services policy during shocks to respond to the needs of unpaid carers, e.g., pandemics, climate disasters or conflict.
- Ensure care services are quickly restored after emergencies

Social protection



Recognise

- Use data on UCDW in design of social protection strategies and programmes.
- Value the role of unpaid carers throughout the lifecycle and ensure that unpaid carers do not become disadvantaged or in poverty, including unpaid carers for disabled and elderly people



Redistribute

- Ensure that programme designs do not reinforce gendered norms and/or add to expectations of unpaid care work, such as conditional transfers based on mothers/parents volunteering, or carers of people with disabilities.
- Design universal non-contributory programmes that help to share the cost of unpaid care work and are also available for informal economy workers (free school meals, childcare vouchers, tax refunds, carer allowances)
- Use universal non-contributory pensions to ensure that unpaid carers, especially women and informal economy workers, are not disadvantaged in old age.
- Promote legal reform that supports paid parental and adoption leave, and flexible working, to make workplaces more conducive for workers with caring responsibilities.



Represent

- Ensure consultation with, and representation of, unpaid carers in design and monitoring of social protection programmes

Disaster recovery and Climate Change



Recognise

- Support collection of data on present and future predicted impacts of climate change on unpaid care workloads, including water and fuel collection, caring for children, ill and people with disabilities, and migration, among others.
- Ensure damage assessments, needs assessments, and crisis impact monitoring instruments, collect data on changes in time spent on UCDW and needs of unpaid carers



Reduce

- Prioritise reconstruction of infrastructure such as water and sanitation, transport networks where damage to infrastructure has increased time necessary for domestic work.
- Restore basic services such as education and health where the breakdown of services has increased workloads on unpaid carers.
- Replace destroyed and damaged equipment used in domestic work as well as production (stoves, mills and laundry as well as tractors and boats).



Redistribute

- Design climate change adaptation programmes and disaster responses that address the needs of unpaid carers.
- Include 'cash for care' components and funding in wider post-disaster 'cash for work' programmes, to support unpaid care work in rebuilding communities.
- Invest in services and subsidies for unpaid carers during pandemics, conflict and forced migration.
- Prepare guidelines for programme implementers and humanitarian response workers to help them recognise and respond to needs of unpaid carers.
- Support civil society organisations including local women's organisations to provide programmes and services targeting needs of unpaid carers



Represent

- Ensure unpaid carers and organisations that represent them are consulted and participate in design of climate adaptation, emergency response, and disaster recovery policy, decision-making, and programme design, at all levels.

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Annex 1: Selected tools

A Toolkit on paid and unpaid care work: Published by UN Women in 2022, [A Toolkit on Paid and Unpaid Care work: From 3Rs to 5Rs](#), provides an annotated bibliography on paid and UCDW organised along the 5Rs of recognize, reduce, redistribute, reward, represent and resilience. It also contains a “How to get engaged” section with guidance for governments, civil society organizations, trade unions and cooperatives, the private sector, donors, international organisations and DFIs.

Addressing gender-based violence in the private sector: Jointly commissioned by IFC, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), and CDC Group, [Addressing Gender-Based Violence and Harassment: Emerging Good Practice for the Private Sector](#) outlines emerging practices in addressing gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH) in operations and investments. In addition to a [toolkit](#), [sector-specific briefs](#) provide targeted guidance on addressing GBVH risks in key sectors (including transport, construction and manufacturing), [case studies](#) provide practical insights and [tip sheets](#) provide hands-on ‘how to’ advice.

Contribution of multinational companies in supporting the care economy: Produced by Business Fights Poverty for Canada’s International Development Research Centre, [How can businesses support care economy enterprises across the value chain?](#) provides emerging insights in-depth interviews with companies and outlines a framework for action. It concludes with a directory of care economy SMEs operating in Africa, Latin America and Asia.

Employer-supported childcare: Developed by the International Finance Corporation (IFC) this [Guide for Employer-Supported Childcare](#) is aimed at the private sector and addresses various aspects of employer-supported childcare, including quality, financial sustainability, and results measurement.

Evidence and Practice Note: Written as part of the World Bank Group Gender Thematic Policy Note Series, [Addressing Care to Accelerate Equality](#) review issues, evidence and lessons learned on the care economy.

Household Care Survey: A toolkit is readily available [providing guidance on using Oxfam’s Household Care Survey \(HCS\) methodology](#), which was developed as part of the WE-Care initiative to transform the provision of UCDW.

Measuring work in official statistics. ILOSTAT of the ILO provides an [overview over the forms of work according to the new statistical standards](#). In addition to an introduction to the framework, it maps which countries implement the 19th ICLS standards and provides research and tools for data producers, including guidance on improving labour force surveys.

Rapid Care Analysis: Developed by Oxfam, the [Rapid Care Analysis](#) (RCA) is an assessment tool to improve the design of a wider development or employment programme through gathering evidence to promote the recognition of care work and to identify practical interventions. The toolbox and training manual are available in English, French, Spanish and Arabic. The Private Sector RCA Guide and Toolkit, forthcoming, is a rapid process for businesses and workers to understand heavy responsibilities for UCDW, usually borne by women workers, and how this affects the effective functioning of the company. The toolkit helps identify practices and policies to better support workers’ UCDW, with long-term benefits for company operations and workers’ wellbeing.

“This document is an output from a project funded by UK aid from the UK government. However, the views expressed and information contained in it are not necessarily those of or endorsed by the UK government who can accept no responsibility for such views or information or for any reliance placed on them.

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