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**ENHANCING THE ENABLING ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT AT ALL LEVELS IN SUPPORT OF  
INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT,  
AND THE PROMOTION OF ECONOMIC INTEGRATION AND COOPERATION**

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**Why we Need a New Global Deal for Gender Equality**

*by*

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*The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of UNCTAD*

# Why we need a new global deal for gender equality

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# Why a new deal for gender equality?

Women making major contributions to economy in all parts of the world.

Key questions

1. What is the nature of that contribution and how could it be enhanced?
2. Are women receiving fair and adequate support and rewards for that contribution- from the state, from companies, from the household?
3. To what extent has the experience of austerity post the financial crisis exacerbated problems?
4. What would be the key elements in a new deal?
5. How could a new deal have benefits for women and the wider society?

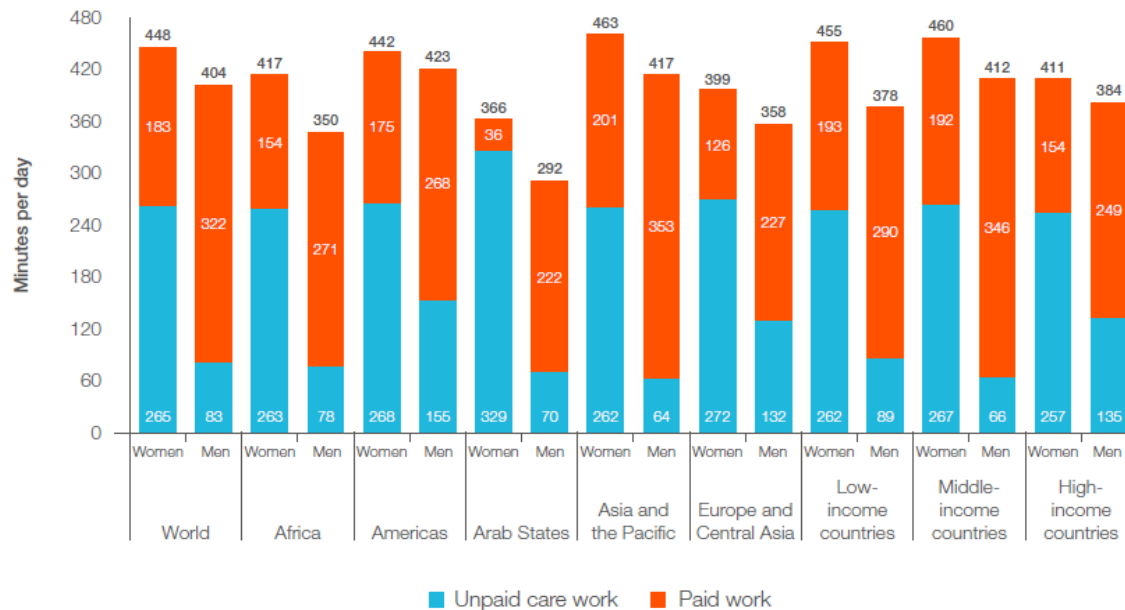
# Women's economic contribution

Wage work- decline in gender gaps in most regions



# Non wage work gender gaps high in all regions

Figure 2. Time spent daily in unpaid care work, paid work and total work, by sex, region and income group, latest year



Non wage work is ensuring both reproduction of existing workforce and ensuring quality of future workforce

Note: See Chapter 2, figure 2.8 (64 countries).

Source: ILO calculations based on Charmes, forthcoming.

# Women's economic contribution

But limits to contribution due to:

Inadequate infrastructure for care

- In 2018, 606 million women of working age have declared themselves to be unavailable for employment or not seeking a job due to unpaid care work, while only 41 million men are inactive for the same reason

Limited opportunities in education or labour market due to care responsibilities and discrimination

- Women with care responsibilities are also more likely to be self-employed and to work in the informal economy, and less likely to contribute to social security. Globally, the share of wage and salaried workers is lower among women carers (62.2 per cent) than among women non-carers (67.8 per cent).

Inadequate returns to women's work- limiting incentives for further development

# Fair and adequate support and rewards from that economic contribution?

## *From companies*

Returns squeezed within global value chains

(The ILO estimates that for 40 OECD countries and the BRIC (Brazil, Russian, India and China) bloc, GVCs generate approximately 453 million jobs (42% women), equating to 20.6% of total employment. This does not include workers in low-income developing countries or lower tiers of value chains).

Penalties for not conforming to male breadwinner model exceed the real costs of any required adjustments

(e.g. penalty for part-time or working in the informal sector to gain flexibility)

Persistent gender pay gap

(low value attached to wage work undertaken by women, especially if associated with care, domestic work, and including in some countries public services)

Failure to take action against sexual harassment

# Fair and adequate support and rewards from that economic contribution?

## *From the state*

Inadequate support for care- infrastructure and services

Hidden value of unpaid work

Consequently limited credits for social protection

State sets minimum wages and public sector pay- minimum wages normally not living wages but more women paid minimum wages

Limited efforts by state to extend employment rights to female-dominated sectors (NGO/TU/ILO efforts to organise and formalise domestic work)



# Fair and adequate support and rewards from that economic contribution?

## *From the household and community*

Social norms/ expectations increase pressures on women combining wage and non wage work

Limited evidence of men contributing to household and care tasks

Unequal pay limits women's power in household

# Has the experience of austerity post the financial crisis exacerbated problems?

Women's economic contribution taken for granted while care infrastructure cut

- Changing labour markets reducing the impact of earlier gender equality reforms- e.g. maternity leave
- Impact on public sector in developed countries largely an issue for women- but not recognised as such
- Recognition by IMF, OECD etc of potential macro contribution from greater gender equality is not leading to rejection of traditional macroeconomic policies of fiscal constraint and labour market flexibility that harm gender equality.

# What would be the key elements in a new deal?

## *Companies*

Revalue women's work within global supply chains

More flexibility to enable women to retain jobs within formal sector

Less use of outsourcing to informal or low wage sector that exploits women's needs for flexibility

More concern for due process and women's rights including right not to be sexually harassed.

## *State*

New social reproduction bargain (Pearson 2013) – to prevent need to work double shift

Recognition of need for/ productivity of investment in care infrastructure and services

Credits for informal and unpaid work in social protection systems

Support for action to formalise employment and extend employment rights including rights not to be harassed

## *Household and community*

Strengthen women's rights to hold income and assets to increase bargaining power in household

Support for women's education

Action to change gendered social norms- e.g. with respect to menstruation, mixed workplaces, sexual harassment

# How could a new deal have benefits for women and the wider society?

1. Benefits from raising the gains for women and developing economies in global value chains
2. Macro benefits from investing in a care economy.
3. Efficiency benefits from investing in care infrastructure
4. Human capital benefits from new deal- women and children
5. Security benefits from formalisation and extension of rights

# 1. Benefits from raising the gains for women/developing economies in global value chains

Kenyan flower industry action by Ethical Trading Initiative led to:

- Sound gender policies on workers rights, training, promotion and grievance procedures
- Participatory social auditing to identify issues facing women workers
- Converting women workers from temporary to permanent workers
- Increase in women workers' trade union membership and inclusion under collective bargaining agreements
- Gender committees on farms for women workers to voice grievances
- Longer lead times for delivery provided by some supermarkets
- Improvements in Kenya's employment law in 2007

More women became supervisors/managers

Reduced reporting of labour abuse and sexual harassment and procedures for reporting and remedy enhanced

Lower labour turnover, more committed skilled workers, higher productivity and quality.

[Source: S.Barrientos, L. Bianchi and C. Berman \(2017\) Women Workers in Global Supply Chains](https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/files/63552201/Women_workers_briefing_paper.pdf)

[https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/files/63552201/Women\\_workers\\_briefing\\_paper.pdf](https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/files/63552201/Women_workers_briefing_paper.pdf)

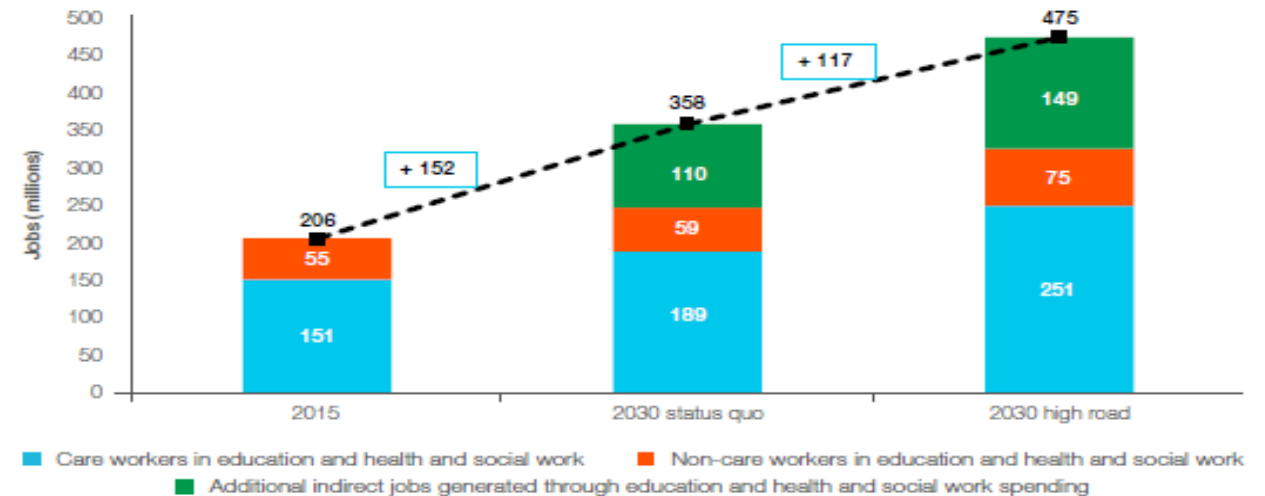
## 2. Macro benefits from investing in a care economy.

The *UK Women's Budget Group F plan* found investment in the care industries would generate approximately twice as many jobs as investment in the construction sector

### *ILO care work report*

Major gains from investing to fill gaps in care –even if maintain status quo employment should rise by 152m but additional 117m if invest to fill gap:

Figure 8. Total care and related employment in 2015 and 2030, status quo and high road scenarios



Note: See Chapter 5, figure 5.11 (45 countries). For 2015, ILO calculations based on labour force and household survey microdata.

Source: Ilkkaracan and Kim, forthcoming.

### 3. Efficiency benefits from investing in care infrastructure

‘policies to balance different types of work should be designed around the household as the center of people’s life and work, such as with the availability of neighborhood day care (as opposed to day care at the firm’s or other institutional levels), access to local schools for all children, and measures to save time in domestic and care activities. This is of course particularly relevant for women, and it can include a large variety of measures such as increasing access to neighborhood health centers, the availability of community services such as sports facilities and centres for the aged, improvements in public transportation, paved streets that make it easier for people to move about, greater access to telephones, and others. Most importantly, these measures should aim at saving time for household members, especially women who tend to have the greatest need to reconcile different types of work’( op.cit: p.6)

Beneria, L. (2007) *The Crisis of Care, International Migration and the Capabilities Approach: Implications for Policy*, Mario Einaudi Center for International Studies, Cornell University.

### 3. Efficiency benefits from investing in care infrastructure

CAPABILITIES	Neighborhood day care centers	Access to schools	Access to health centers	Community services	Public and private transportation	Access to telephone	Family subsidies	Paved & secure streets, etc.	Access to water, laundry, etc.
1. Being able to raise children & to take care of others	++	+	+++	+	+	+	++	+	++
2. Being able to work in the labor market and other projects	+++	+++	++	+	+	++	++	+	+
3. Being able to be mobile	+	++	+	+	++	+	Depending on use	++	+
4. Being able to engage in leisure activities	++	++	++	+++	++	+	+	+	++
5. Being able to exercise autonomy in allocating one's time	+++	+++	++	++	+	+	+	+	++



# 4. Human capital benefits from new deal- women and children

Women are more able to utilise their education, therefore more likely to develop it.

More educated mothers are more likely to be employed- both may have positive impacts on child development and future human capital.

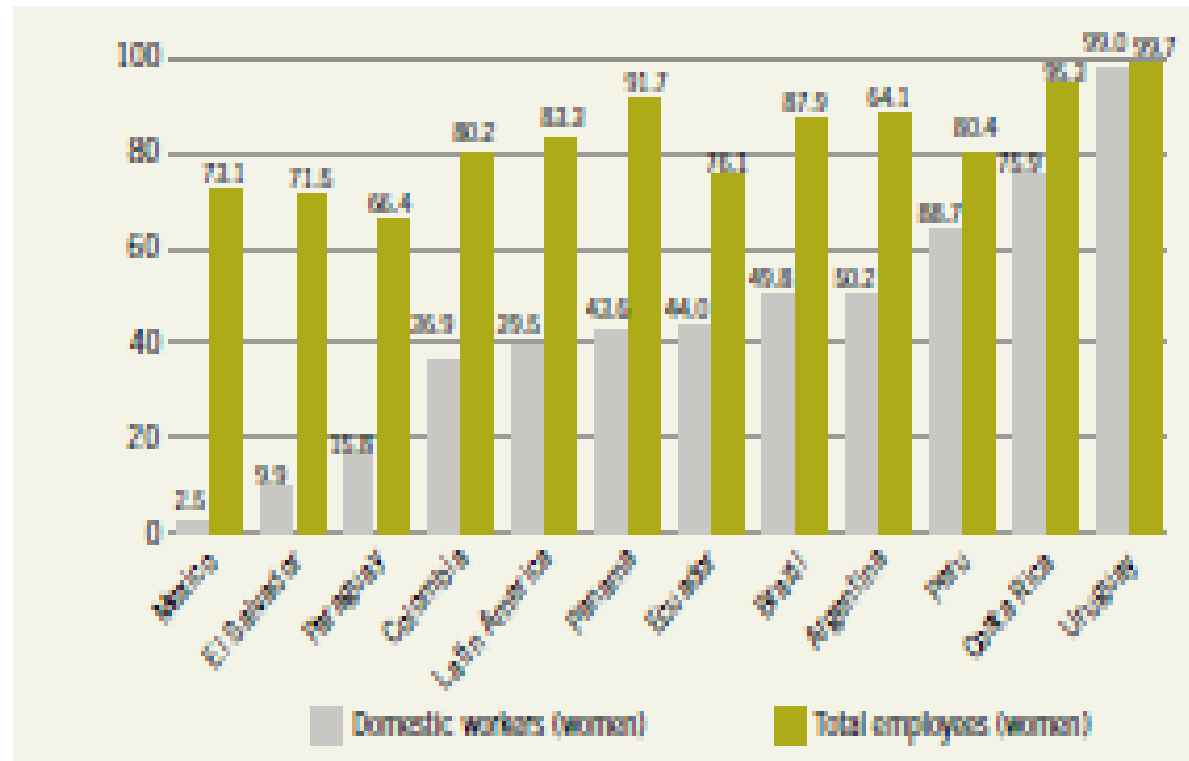
A program operated by an Italian NGO, in a poor neighborhood of Quito, Ecuador, targeted parents of children from birth to age 5. The program empowered women in various dimensions, including higher labor force participation and employment, higher likelihood of a full-time job in the formal-sector and higher wages. Treated mothers were also more likely to continue their education, make independent decisions regarding their own finances, have greater role in intra-household decisions, especially on issues involving children's education and discipline and increase parental inputs into their children's development. Treated children improved their cognitive and non-cognitive skills, and were less likely to be absent/ temporarily drop-out from schooling

V. Lavy, G. Lotti and Z. Yan ["Empowering Mothers and Enhancing Early Childhood Investment: Effect on Adults Outcomes and Children Cognitive and Non-Cognitive Skills"](#)

NBER Working Paper 22963, December 2016,

# 5. Security benefits from formalisation and extension of rights

Graph 4: Social security coverage, % of urban population with access to health and/or pensions 2014



Domestic workers benefit from formalisation –e.g. through access to social protection- but also some benefits for employers as more guidance on how they should manage the employment relationship

# Conclusions

- New deal needed in all countries and regions
- But priorities may differ according to the most urgent problems
- Care work needs to be made more visible in macro economic policy- women's work time is not infinitely flexible and withdrawal of state support/failure to provide support has consequences
- Undervaluation of women's work needs to be addressed- involves redistribution within countries and between developed/developing economies through global supply chains.