

LINKAGES BETWEEN UNPAID CARE WORK AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE



Contents Page

Key concepts

1. Introduction	p 3
2. International Legal Framework related to UCW	p 4
3. How Generation G understands UCW?	p 4
4. Our approach to UCW	p 5
5. Why is UCW important?	p 6
6. The burden of care for adolescent girls	p 7
7. UCW and Gender Based Violence	p 8
8. Challenges with paid care work in South Africa	p 9
9. Policy Framework on UCW in South Africa	p10
10. Generation G program commitment to address UCW	p10

Definitions of Key Concepts

Concept	Definition
Unpaid Care Work	all unpaid services provided within a household for its members, including care of persons, housework, and voluntary community work (Elson, 2000).
Gender-Based Violence	Violence that is directed against a person because of that person's gender or violence that affects persons of a particular gender disproportionately.
Austerity measures	A set of economic policies, usually consisting of tax increases, spending cuts, or a combination of the two, used by the government to reduce budget deficits.
Productive work	Providing goods and services that have monetary value in the capitalist system and are compensated in the form of a paid wage.
Gender role	A way of appearing and behaving that meets cultural expectations based on an individual's gender. Traditionally, people have been expected to fit into a male or female role.
Gender Responsive Public Services	Quality public services that meet women's needs and are of significant importance to the achievement of gender equality and to ending violence and harassment against women in the world of work.
COVID-19 hard lockdown	Restriction policies for people and communities to stay where they are due to risks that could harm them if they move and interact freely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These could be stay-at-home orders, curfews, quarantine, etc).

1. Introduction

Unpaid Care Work refers to the activities women do in the household to take care of everyone by maintaining the well-being of everyone. This is done through caring for children, the elderly, and sick individuals, washing, cooking, shopping, cleaning, and helping other family members with their chores. Care work is shouldered mainly by women and girls whose time is dedicated to it and significantly contributes to poverty for them. It is not only the length of time devoted to UCW that puts women at a disadvantage; it is also the types of activities and nature of the tasks that create and reveal further inequalities among women and between households. UN Women estimates the value of unpaid care work to be between 10-39% of the Gross Domestic Product and can contribute more to the economy than manufacturing, commerce, or transportation. As critical as unpaid care work to the well-being of those who provide productive labour, it is often not considered and valued. This is due to the cultural and societal expectations that women and girls are inherently providers of care in the household. In some cultures, women are considered good or bad by looking at the quality of care they provide to the household. In efforts to promote gender equality, feminists highlighted the burden and the challenges of not valuing and recognizing the economic contributions of all forms of work- paid and unpaid.

Mainstream economists define economic growth using conventional measures such as market employment and income per capita. In economic terms, the invisibility of unpaid care work (UCW) is partly due to the limited notion of economic activity, which considers economic value synonymous with monetary value or what is paid in the market. Even though South Africa is lauded for the progressive women empowerment legislative framework, the focus has been primarily on female political representation and women's participation in employment. As critical as these indicators are to women's empowerment, the limitation is that they ignore the social cost of a shift from the informal to the formal economy. Therefore, there is a need for empirical analysis of time devoted to UCW. This position paper posits that UCW is directly linked to the market through social reproduction and human maintenance and should be measured, recognized, valued, reduced, and redistributed.

2. International Legal Framework related to UCW

This section outlines the international human rights framework that recognize the need to alleviate unpaid care work for women to realise gender equality. Globally, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) address gender equality by calling for countries to recognize and value UCW through public services, infrastructure and social protection policies, and the promotion of shared responsibility within households and families. The Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is a tool for a policy framework that includes the socio-economic rights of women. These rights cannot be fully realized if women's childbearing remains on the margins of policy decision-making. Women, as mothers and carers, must become an integral part of how we think of economic development. Women in the changing world of work must be considered equal citizens and partners in economic development. This calls for innovation to accommodate the changing work conditions to be more inclusive.

Whether women are in business or unpaid care work, the Beijing Platform of Action acknowledges that they enormously contribute to the economy. Gender discrimination means women often end up in insecure, low-wage jobs. The International Labour Organization (ILO) has tracked the burden of men's and women's contributions to unpaid care work for over 20 years. One ILO report highlights that women prefer to work at paid jobs, and those at paid jobs face the challenge of work-family balance and lack of affordable care.

The international framework needs to be domesticated through national policies that promote universal access to *quality* care, services, and infrastructure. In South Africa, some policies promote universal access; however, the realities of women at the community level starkly contrast with some policy provisions.

3. How Generation G understands UCW?

Generation G program promotes gender justice in society so young men and women live in full diversity. This is achieved by focusing on elements key to the realization of gender equality- unpaid care work and Gender-based Violence. The program acknowledges that UCW is not only a burden disproportionately borne by women and girls but is also a social good necessary for the upkeep of everyone in the household. The gendered social norms are critical determinants of UCW where women and girls carry out care duties in compliance with societal expectations. Deviation from these expectations often carries penalties imposed by family members and/or the broader society.

Women are not a homogenous group; it is, therefore, essential to understand that they participate in UCW in varied ways. Girls and young women often bear the brunt of UCW, as evidence shows that the burden of UCW peaks in the 20s and 30s. This was corroborated by adolescent girls who participated in the Time Use Survey for this position paper, who felt that they hardly have time for leisure and intimate relationships with partners compared to their male peers in the household. This does not mean that women in their 40s are absolved from UCW; children often assist them. This sentiment was shared by the adolescent girls who participated in the Time Use Survey and reported doing school homework while helping their mothers prepare dinner. For the Generation G program, UCW is linked and critical to addressing gender inequality. Therefore, caregivers and care receivers should be sensitised to its importance.

4. Our Approach to UCW

The section below outlines the proposed approach and methodology for the assignment. A mixed-methods design for this exercise was preferred due to the complexity of the care economy phenomenon, and a single methodological approach would have been inadequate.

The Rapid Care Analysis methodology was used to assess who in a community carries out unpaid care so that where care work is heavy and unequal, it can be recognized, reduced, and redistributed. This methodology can also start a longer awareness-raising process and change for gender justice. It is not a detailed analysis of social norms, power relations, or advocacy. It is an assessment, a diagnostic tool. Therefore, the objectives of this position paper are as follows:

- To understand the prevalence and the context of UCW.
- To explore factors that affect the prevalence of UCW.
- To identify gaps in the policy framework on UCW that influence women's lives.

A Time-Use survey was administered to 20 adolescent girls under 17, identified as females at a critical age where UCW starts to peak. Time-Use surveys are also a great tool that makes a household contribution to the economy transparent. They also reveal the pattern of time distribution to access such vital inputs that matter significantly from a gendered perspective as more unpaid work is needed to fill in infrastructure gaps. One Focus Group Discussion with young women in their early 20s was conducted to access qualitative data demonstrating the interlinkages between household-markets-government at the economic level. These are young women who occupy entry-level jobs in the workplace.

5. Why is UCW important?

As much as addressing UCW is critical for gender equality and women's empowerment, some views question the attention afforded to it, particularly the component of pay. One such view is that households supply labour to the market; in return, they receive income that benefits those who provide care. Due to women's social status, their household bargaining power is limited; therefore, one cannot be sure that the income received by a household member will be distributed equitably. This position paper advances the notion that households are connected to the rest of the economy through their production capacity- they produce goods and services. Therefore, UCW, mainly provided by women and girls, should be recognized, reduced, and distributed.

From the Focus Group Discussion, the idea that men also provide care for the household by painting, fixing broken items, and gardening was advanced. This was debunked by others who felt that UCW refers to activities carried out consistently and daily for the well-being of the household members. The care component of UCW means that these activities provide what is necessary for the health, well-being, and protection of someone or something.

There is a view that there should be no distinction between direct and indirect care activities. This is problematic as it obscures the complexity of UCW carried out by women and girls. From a nuanced perspective, care can be primary, secondary, and the supervision of a child or dependent. For example, care provision can be preceded by bathing the child or the sick, cleaning the room, etc. These are activities that adolescent girls reported carrying out in the mornings during school term when they prepare for school—using tools that capture the complexity of care surfaces the burden of care shouldered by women and girls in households.

6. The burden of care for adolescent girls

Unlike their counterparts, adolescent girls carry the burden of care in their families like older female household members. This is due to gender expectations embedded early in girls' lives, where they learn how to do house chores before age 10. It is the ingrained gender roles, responsibilities, and behaviour in families that determine who does the household chores.

"I learned how to wash dishes and sweep the floor at seven years old, and when I did this, my mother would say I was a good girl. As I grow older, there are more responsibilities added. I also want to do the work to help my mother, even if I am tired." 23-year-old woman, FGD.

Girls reported that childcare is provided for toddlers and preschoolers. The childcare responsibilities include walking the child to the creche, bathing the child in the morning, feeding the child and looking after the child while the mother cooks. The young women who walk the child to school shared some of the challenges of children crying for sweets and having to manage that situation on the way to school or work.

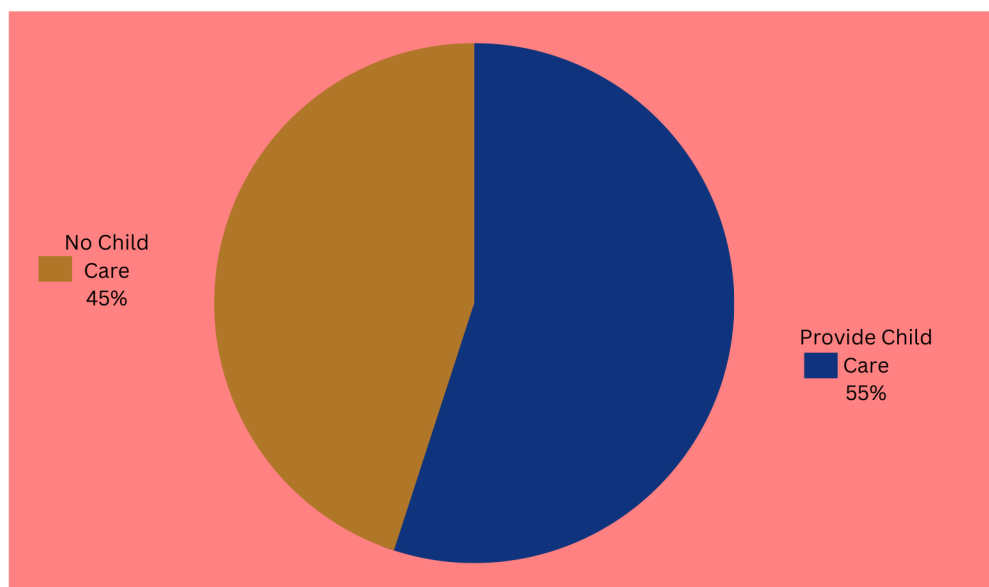
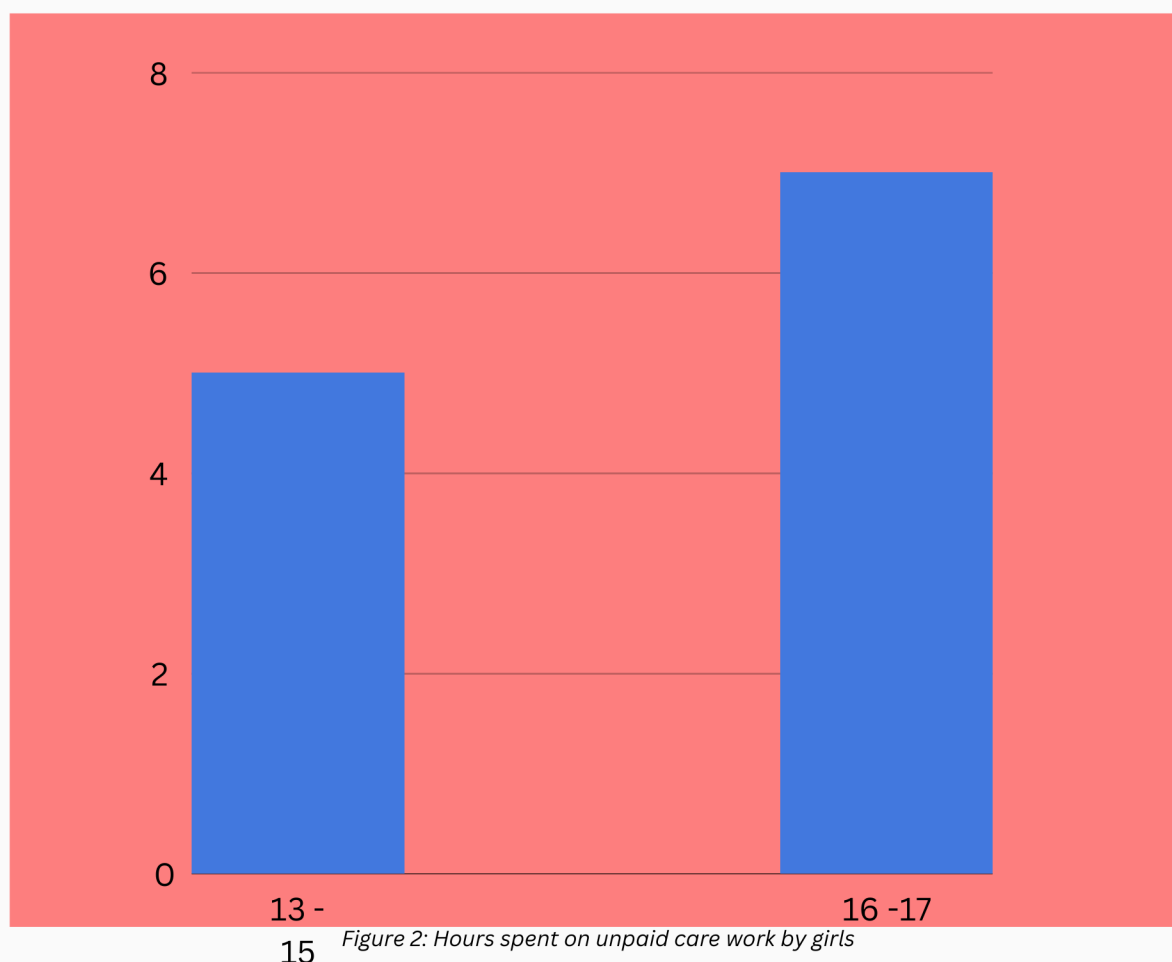


Figure 1: Number of girls who provide child care

Looking at the time spent on care work by girls, most indicated that they carry out caregiving activities in the morning before and after school. The burden of care peaks in the afternoon and early evening, and they noted that their male counterparts often use this time to socialize with peers. The data provided is based on a 24-hour clock during the school term on a weekday.

Younger girls spend fewer hours on care work than older girls.



The burden of care influences the socioeconomic prospects, life paths and outcomes of the girls, as Plan International UK noted that as their domestic responsibilities increase, time poverty will undoubtedly affect their academic success and their capacity to find decent work.

7. Unpaid Care Work and Gender-Based Violence

As noted earlier, there are linkages between unpaid care work and Gender Based Violence (GBV). Gendered social norms are at the core of both UCW and GBV. These also occur at the household level, where there is a proximity between the carer and the receiver (UCW) and the victim and perpetrator (GBV). Households are often seen as primary sites of violence, where family members reportedly applied for a third of protection orders against each other in 2019/2020. Women who provide UCW and experience GBV are kept close to their abusive partners. It is important to note that the composition of the South African household includes extended family members. Through UCW, women and girls service male household members, refreshing them to return to their domineering and exploitative position in society. He further states that the family is an oppressive institution that damages its members, but physical and mental damages are shrouded in secrecy.

During global shocks such as the COVID-19 lockdown, evidence shows a spike in UCW and GBV. During the hard lockdown, it was recorded that 5.6 million adults moved to a household with a child. This is in contrast to the 2017 data that showed less than half of men lived in households with less than one child. Casales and Posel (2020) state that the moving adults during lockdown periods are likely to be men moving to and from places of employment to homes. The COVID-19 hard lockdown periods also allowed employers to consider how they handle care work carried out by female employees. This is an opportune time to advocate for flexible parental leave that has the potential to encourage men to be involved in care work.

8. Challenges with paid care work in South Africa

Although UCW is fraught with challenges, paid care workers face their challenges. This indicates the attitude policymakers have towards care work, in general. The 2022's third quarter Labour Force Survey reports a significant decrease in domestic workers (by 3.7%) since the advent of COVID-19. It is well documented that domestic workers is one group of employees that lost jobs during the difficult lockdown periods. This also demonstrated that, when faced with the financial crisis, households cut off paid care work which will ultimately be borne, at no cost, by female family members. The Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Amendment (COIDA) Bill is one of the laws protecting domestic workers and awaiting a presidential signature.

Most Community Health Workers (CHWs) are trained to deliver healthcare services in the community but have no professional or certified education. They often serve as the first point of contact with the Primary Health Care system and are seen as a potential solution to overcome current human resources for health shortfalls in different settings. Health Systems Trust notes that they are a cadre of disease-focused community workers employed particularly for HIV and AIDS and TB care, treatment, and support. CHWs support and assist individuals and families in navigating health and social service systems. Health Systems Trust further notes that the CHW's contribution is to take care of terminally ill patients at home, which results in families becoming dependent on them and not getting involved in the care of their family members. Government outsources the employment of CHWs to non-profit organizations that pay them a monthly stipend on a one-year contract with no benefits. During the COVID-19 lockdown, many CHWs were frontline workers who educated communities about the virus, screened for COVID-19, and traced those who tested positive for the new virus- SARS-CoV-2 Their services are fundamental to a primary healthcare-based system. However, there needs to be more will to remunerate their services adequately.

9. Policy Framework on UCW in South Africa

The following is a map of policies that acknowledges the burden of care women face but need to address UCW more clearly.

- Amendment of the policy that provides more days for paternity leave. There is a need for more policies that encourage men to take up care roles in the household. There is a need for flexible parental leave that can be shared between the parents. This recognizes that women and men spend considerable time in the world of work, and workplace policies that cater to this are likely to promote the involvement of both parents in childcare. Employers can leverage COVID19 lockdown periods that saw people working from home and adjust their policies to recognize employees' care activities at home while fulfilling the company's responsibilities.

- The policies that encourage increased women’s participation in the workplace need to recognise that women are already a source of labour for the household and the community. Approaching policy-making on women’s empowerment should include mechanisms to decrease the burden of unpaid care work, not to see women as an untapped source of labour. Acknowledging that women occupy fewer senior management positions in the workplace, mechanisms to increase this should recognize the number of household activities women carry out to sustain the well-being of families.
- The National Policy Framework on Women Empowerment and Gender Equality, known as the Gender Policy Framework, is trans-sectoral and seeks to define new terms of engagement with each other in private and public spaces while facilitating equal access to goods and services for men and women. Although the policy aims to promote a change in attitude towards women and enhance recognition of their value to society, it is silent on women’s unpaid care work. While it acknowledges the need to improve women’s access to basic services, the Gender Policy Framework seeks to ensure that gender considerations are effectively integrated into all government policies, programs, and activities.
- The National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (NSP on GBVf) recognizes that one of the factors that lead to GBV are social and gendered norms from childhood within families and communities; and ideas about femininity that promote women’s subordination to men. These factors sustain women’s unpaid care work in households- which is seen as inherently women’s work.

10. Generation G program commitments to address UCW

In the advocacy efforts, the Generation G program commits to highlighting and championing the:

- Accessibility of quality public assets that facilitate the provisioning of drinking water and the construction of feeder roads can alleviate the burdens by increasing productivity and reducing the time spent on unpaid care work.
- Provision of gender-sensitive services employment benefits for women in higher productivity jobs in the labour market.
- Creation of appropriate social/institutional infrastructure to better allow for reconciling paid work and unpaid work obligations for the population in general and women in particular
- The push for a universal basic income grant will benefit caregivers in the long run, rather than a grant with a few months’ extensions. The Social Relief Distress (SRD) grant ends in March 2023, and caregivers benefit from this. This is good as it is likely to make a huge difference in households- the standard of living and basic food basket has increased.
- Prioritisation of policies that promote decent work for women.
- A national conversation on norms regarding gender roles and the implications of this on women and girls’ livelihoods. The purpose is to change behaviour and attitude and social norms.

References

- ⁱUN Women (2016); *Women's Economic Empowerment in the changing world of work*. Report of the Secretary-General, E/CN.6/2017/3.
- ⁱⁱBeneria and Sen (1999); *The enduring debate over unpaid labour*. International Labour Review, Volume 138. No.3
- ⁱⁱⁱILO Gallup Report (2017); *Towards a better future for women and work: Voices of women and men*
- ^{iv}Real Choices, Real Lives: Girls Burden of Unpaid Care by Plan International UK. 2017
- ^vStatistics South Africa (2021); *Experience of Disputes on the Rise in South Africa*
- ^{vi}Yesufu S (2022); *The Scourge of GBV on Women plaguing South Africa*
- ^{vii}Fidelis Udo (2020); *COVID-19 Lockdown: South Africa Battles the Deadly Epidemic of GBV. African Women in Law.*
- ^{viii}Nomthandazo Mgingxa (2011) *Community Health Workers A Brief Description of HST Experience.* Health Systems Trust.
- ^{xi}Bhekisisa (2020): *Community Health Workers- Could COVID-19 finally unlock their role in NHI?*