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Global Care Chains: Addressing Unpaid Reproductive Labour in the Philippines



Source: Petrozziello, A. (2013). "Gender on the Move." UN Women, p. 129.

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Introduction

This brief examines policy options to address the gender disparities of unpaid care work created by the global care chain. Examining the Philippine context, potential responses include equalizing maternity and paternity leave, expanding state childcare services, partnering with money transfer businesses (MTBs), and promoting the recruitment men for care positions. This issue has been recognized by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).¹ Target 5.4 of the SDGs calls for the recognition of the value of "unpaid care labour and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of responsibility within the household and the family."² Moving beyond simply recognizing the value of unpaid care labour, social policies must be developed to address the gendered division of reproductive labour in ways that informed by critical feminist literature.

Background

¹ Hennebray, J. et al. (2016). "Women Working Worldwide: A Situational Analysis of Women Migrant Workers." UN Women, 83.

² UNDESA. (2015). "Sustainable Development Goals." <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300>

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The Philippines is one of the largest labour exporting countries in the world and women comprise over 50% of all Filipino migrant workers abroad.³ With upwards of 10 million migrants working outside the country, the social costs due to family separation are high.⁴ The burden of care for those left behind falls disproportionately upon women, who are often required to provide minimally or unpaid child care for those who have migrated for work, forming 'global care chain.'⁵ The provision of unpaid care work is perpetuated by the state's failure to assume responsibility despite its active encouragement of women's migration as a key part of its development strategy.⁶

The infrastructure that provides care, the household, markets, the public sector, and the non-profit sector, is analyzed and referred to as the 'care diamond'.⁷ Globally, the family is the first source of care. However, these four sectors often overlap with one another, as a single family may rely on family, private and state-funded sources of care at once.⁸ In Western Europe and to a limited extent North America, the state has been more active in the provision of care. Within most migrant origin countries, particularly the Philippines, care is largely provided by the family. When welfare states diminish and relinquish the provision of care, this creates a care deficit, which is shouldered disproportionately by the household/family, and by women in particular.

Situational Analysis

Gender ideologies surrounding care remain deeply entrenched, with a gender imbalance in domestic labour present globally.⁹ Both empirical and ethnographic work continue to suggest that women are more likely to spend more time and money providing care for the family.¹⁰ In the Philippines, 84% of the total household time dedicated to childcare is carried out by women, and 31% of working-age women report that they are not in the labour force, whereas only 3% of men report the same.¹¹ Time-use data by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) indicates consistently higher time dedicated toward unpaid domestic work among women than men, aside from the Nordic states. The OECD average time dedicated to household labour were 100 and 400 minutes for men and women, respectively.¹² Indeed, the familial spending of remittances is often influenced by the gendered divisions of household and care responsibilities.¹³

³ Ang, A. (2015). "Gender-Sensitive Remittances and Asset-Building in the Philippines." *UN Women*, 1.

⁴ Hennebry, J., Holliday, J. & Monirizzuman, M. (forthcoming). "At What Cost? Women Migrant Workers, Remittances, and Development." *UN Women*, 52.

⁵ Parreñas, R. (2000). Migrant Filipina Domestic Workers and the International Division of Reproductive Labour. *Gender and Society* 14(5) 560 – 580.; Hennebry J. et al., "Women Working Worldwide," 38.

⁶ Petrozziello, J. A. (2013). Gender on the Move: Working on the Migration-Development Nexus from a Gender Perspective. *UN Women: Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic*, 136.

⁷ *International Labour Organization*. (2013). "Domestic Work Policy Brief: 3." International Labour Office: Geneva, Switzerland, 3; Hennebry J. et al., "Women Working Worldwide," 40.

⁸ Raghuram, P. (2012). "Global Care, Local Configurations – Challenges to Conceptualizations of Care." *Global Networks* 12(2), 163.

⁹ Collantes, C. (2016). "Reproductive dilemmas, labour and Intimacies." *Southeast Asia Research Journal* 14(1) 77 – 97.

¹⁰ Bedford, K. (2009). *Developing Partnerships: Gender, Sexuality and the Reformed World Bank*. University of Minesota Press.

¹¹ Asia Development Bank. (2013). "Gender Equality in the Labour Market." Mandaluyong City, Philippines, 11.

¹² *OECD*. (n.d.). "Time Spend in Unpaid, Paid and Total Work, by Sex."

¹³ Collantes, "Reproductive Dilemmas, Labour and Intimacies," 83.

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The Philippines, among other origin countries that promote the remittances-for-development model have a responsibility to provide care services for its workers who are keeping the country's economy afloat. While remittances from overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) contribute 10% of annual GDP (over USD 28 billion),¹⁴ their migration largely results from necessity due to inadequate livelihood opportunities at home, blurring the dichotomy between economic and forced migration.¹⁵ Further, there are few public resources to care for dependents, or services attending to the needs of families and children who remain in the country.¹⁶ As a result, 'families', notably women, are expected to fill these roles and are prevented from pursuing other activities or pursuits, such as education or other employment possibilities. The Sustainable Development Goals present an opportunity for governments to emerge as global leaders in providing childcare services for transnational families.

Maternity & Paternity Leave

Within the formal sector in the Philippines, the different standards for maternity leave (Republic Act 7322) and paternity leave (Republic Act 8187), which demonstrate the gendered expectations of care roles. Maternity leave is offers 100% of wages for 3 months, whereas paternity leave only provides 7 days of compensation. The respective legal instruments reflect how women are naturally expected to care for children, whereas men are not deemed suitable caregivers in the same way. This reinforces the gender binary in the context of childcare, to the detriment of both men and women, and those receiving care. To reiterate, women continually shoulder a disproportionate amount of the care burden, and men who do carework are stigmatized for engaging activities deemed 'not masculine.'¹⁷

Childcare services

The care deficit in the Philippines is compounded by underfunded and insufficiently resourced early childhood development programs. The most common problems facing the childcare sector in the country include inadequate materials, lack of involvement among parents/guardians. There are minimal standard procedures or pre-service and in-service training for daycare teachers.¹⁸ The implementation of the National Daycare Law varies across local government units (LGU). In some units, careworkers are permanent employees, but in others, they are mostly volunteers.¹⁹ The National Plan of Action for Child is hindered by challenges of adopting the program to the local level. LGUs are encouraged to form development plans, and investment plans, as well as local state of children reports, but few LGUs have complied.²⁰ Programs are not reaching target populations on account of a lack of awareness among local chief executives on evolving policies, and a lack of ca-

¹⁴ World Bank. (2016). "Migration and Remittances: Recent Developments and Outlook." 5, 20.;

¹⁵ Pratt, G., Johnston, C., & Banta, V. (2016). Lifetimes of Disposability and Surplus Entrepreneurs in Bagong Barrio, Manila. *Antipode*, 12.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Mencare. (2016). "The MenCare Parental Leave Platform," 11. <http://men-care.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2016/03/Parental-Leave-Platform-web.pdf>

¹⁸ Abulon. E. L. R. (2013). "Bragngay Day Care Centres: Emergence, Current Status and Implications to Teacher Education." Philippine Normal University, 318.

¹⁹ Caoli-Rodriguez, R. B. (2008). "The Philippines Country Case Study." *UNESCO*, 97.

²⁰ Yacat, J. A. (2011). "Child Protection in the Philippines: A Situational Analysis." *Save the Children*, 13.

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capacity of local government personnel.²¹

The Role of Money Transfer Businesses

The SDGs signal that gender roles in care provision could be an innovative area of CSR programming for Money Transfer Businesses. There is potential for the governments of origin countries to partner with the private sector to support programs that provide childcare for transnational families, as well as initiatives that shift gender roles of care and domestic work.

Western Union reports that it has given over USD 106 million to over 2,500 NGOs, but its activities can be expanded. MTBs profit from transnational migration, and also possess resources that can address the unequal burden of care. Western Union, the world's leading money transfer business (MTB), posted a net income of USD 582 million in 2014.²² Western Union's grant to the AWECA Foundation provides mobile trade programs for out-of-school youth in the Philippines.²³ The Western Union Foundation also implements various programs aimed to raise the financial literacy of women in migration in several different countries. While these programs aim to empower disadvantaged youth, there is a need to fund stable, community-based care collectives for children ages 0 – 6 and to support programs that support fathers in parental roles.

Recruiting Men for Carework Positions

Deeply embedded perceptions of gender prevent men from being involved in carework. Current initiatives to increase the involvement of men in care roles are underway at international, state, and grassroots level. The international organization MenCare develops campaigns in various national contexts such as Indonesia and Sri Lanka that seek to more actively involve men in active fatherhood and caring roles. The largest not-for-profit care provider in the UK, Ankor, has been actively recruiting men while lobbying the British government to take a systemic approach to diversifying the care sector.²⁴ The German government, in 2012, spent 13 million euros on programs aiming to recruit men into early childhood education and positions.²⁵ In the Philippines, the organization "AMMA" works with fathers who have wives working abroad to improve their parenting skills.²⁶ Highlighting the work of 'fatherhood' training programs has been critiqued for continuing to offload the responsibility of care from the state onto individuals, and downloading the politics of care from the state to the family. However, this approach has value in cases where the state may not have the capacity to provide care services.²⁷

²¹ Yacat, J. A. "Child Protection in the Philippines," 14.

²² Western Union. (2015). Money Moving for Better: 2015 Annual Meeting of Shareholders, Proxy Statement, & 2014 Annual Report, 150. <http://ir.westernunion.com/investor-relations/financials/annual-reports/>

²³ Western Union Foundation. (2015). Economic Opportunity. http://foundation.westernunion.com/economic_opportunity.html

²⁴ Day, L.. (2015). More Male care Workers Needed, Says Provider's Chief. *BBC*. <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-34103302>

²⁵ Wade, L. (2012). Germany Attempts to Recruit Men into Child Care. *Sociological Images*.

<https://thesocietypages.org/socimages/2012/09/27/germany-attempts-to-recruit-men-into-child-care/>

²⁶ Arkin, F. (2014). "Fatherhood 101: Near Manila, A School for Stay-at-Home Dads." *Macleans*.

<http://www.macleans.ca/politics/worldpolitics/fatherhood-101/>

²⁷ Bedford, K. (2009). *Developing Partnerships: Gender, Sexuality and the Reformed World Bank*. University of Minnesota Press, 125.

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Recommendations:

Substantively addressing the politically, economically, and socially entrenched institutions that perpetuate women's unpaid labour, as identified by the SDGs, must include the following policy responses.

- Republic Act No. 8187, or the 'Paternity Leave Act of 1996' should be amended for paternity leave to equal 100 days, which is the same amount of time dedicated to maternity leave. While such a recommendation is limited to the formal sector, or firms with the capacity to provide parental leave, it could help shift broader gendered-expectations of care.
- Consistent with Article 3 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Philippine government must fully implement the National Daycare Law and dedicate enough funding to ensure that Daycare Centres are operational, resourced, and staffed with paid employees with optimal child-to-careworker ratio. Daycare centres must be equipped with medical facilities, kitchens, common spaces, and staff that receive decent wages. This will not only ensure better childcare and protection for children, but increase the amount of childcare provision in the country that is paid, rather than unpaid.
- Governments of origin countries should partner with Money Transfer businesses (MTBs) such as Western Union to expand their CSR programs to include childcare. Public responsibility and private support for care will help legitimate care work and will increase formal employment opportunities by enabling caregivers to convert a portion of their time from unpaid to paid work.²⁸
- Governments of migrant origin and receiving countries alike should actively encourage men to partake in care oriented roles, both within the family, private sector, and in contexts where care is provided by the state. Implementing this recommendation can include government-sponsored advocacy campaigns calling for men's participation in carework, or highlighting the global care chain and its global impacts on unpaid caregivers, their families, and other dependents. Advocacy campaigns cannot be implemented in a vacuum, but can support cultural changes when enacted in combination with the other policy interventions.

²⁸ Razavi, S. (2007). The Political and Social Economy of Care in a Development Context. Conceptual Issues, Research Questions, and policy Options. *United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD): Gender and Development Program Paper No. 3*. Geneva, Switzerland.

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