Valuing and Investing in Unpaid Care and Domestic Work

COUNTRY CASE STUDY Philippines
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Philippines
Acknowledgements

This Philippines case study, *Valuing Unpaid Care and Domestic Work*, was prepared as part of the Development Account Project on Strengthening Social Protection for Pandemic Responses: Identifying the Vulnerable, Aiding Recovery and Building Resilience. It responds in particular to the stream on “strengthening a gender emphasis in designing policies to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, especially the care economy”.

The case study report was developed through collaboration between the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) in the United Kingdom, under the overall direction and guidance of Srinivas Tata, Director of the Social Development Division with ESCAP.

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Information on programme initiatives and progress towards the unpaid care work agenda in the Philippines was provided by officials of the Philippine Commission on Women. In particular, we would like to thank Anita E. Baleda, Chief of Policy Development, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Division (PDPMED); Avery Silk S. Arevalo, Senior Gender and Development Specialist, PDPMED; May Angelica A. Saludez, Senior Gender and Development Specialist; and Pamela C. Susara, Supervising Gender and Development Specialist as well as Leah Payud, Resilience Portfolio Manager, Oxfam Philippines, who provided special inputs on the 2020 National Household Care Survey conducted in the Philippines.

Karen Emmons edited the report, and Daniel Feary designed the publication.

Explanatory notes

The analyses in the *Valuing Unpaid Care and Domestic Work: Philippines* report are based on data and information available up to the end of January 2022. Groupings of countries and territories or areas referred to are defined as follows.

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References to dollars ($) are to United States dollars, unless otherwise stated.
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ASEAN  Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ESCAP  United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
GEWE  Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
ILO  International Labour Organization
NEDA  National Economic and Development Authority
NSCB  National Statistical Coordination Board
PCW  Philippine Commission on Women
SDG  Sustainable Development Goal
UNDP  United Nations Development Programme
The Philippines ranks 17th in the world in terms of reducing its gender gap on various economic, political and social measures (WEF, 2021). It is the only country in Asia to make it into the top 20 of that ranking. What makes this performance more impressive is the fact that the Philippines is classified as a lower-middle-income country (World Bank, 2021b). Despite constraints on fiscal resources and developmental challenges, the Philippines has managed to close its gender gaps in educational attainment, health and survival as well as women's representation in senior managerial, professional and technical roles (WEF, 2021).

This progress, however, is undercut by the female labour force participation rate, which stands at 47.6 per cent, compared with 74.8 per cent for men (ASEAN Secretariat, 2020b). The demands of unpaid care work and home production account for more of women's time – constraining their participation in the paid market economy (ESCAP, 2021a; Abrigo and Francisco-Abrigo, 2019). The COVID-19 pandemic has further intensified the unpaid care and domestic work responsibilities of women, caused by the school closures, mobility restrictions and difficulties in food and water provisioning (UN Women, 2020).

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) initially commissioned research to assess the impact of the pandemic on the unpaid care economy in countries across Asia and the Pacific. Next, it spotlighted the role and value of women's unpaid care and domestic work among Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). These efforts dovetailed into the ASEAN Comprehensive Framework on Care Economy, developed as a result of ASEAN governments' resolve to put care at the centre of public policy in recovery from the pandemic efforts (ASEAN, 2021). This framework identifies strategic priority areas for a multipronged, multidimensional and multifaceted response to leaving no one behind. To strengthen the close technical collaboration between ESCAP and ASEAN on addressing the unpaid care economy in ASEAN Member States, ESCAP commissioned country-level case studies on Cambodia, Indonesia and the Philippines to develop a fine-tuned analysis of the role of unpaid care and domestic work within the larger care economy and how it must be addressed.

This case study on the Philippines documents the country's progress in addressing women's unpaid care and domestic work within the larger legislative, institutional and political economy context. Most importantly, this case study tracks the evolution of the unpaid care and domestic work agenda within national policies and the actions of women's machineries, such as the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW). Using the conceptual framework promoted in ESCAP's regional and subregional reports on the unpaid care economy (ESCAP, 2021a and 2021b), this case study highlights promising practices and forthcoming initiatives under four care policy categories – care infrastructure, care-related social protections, care services and employment-related care policies. The aim is to strengthen the case for recognizing, valuing and redistributing unpaid care work in a manner that can enable women to participate in the public life of the nation on more favourable terms.

The advance of women's economic, social and political participation by acknowledging and addressing their care work ties into Sustainable Development

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Goal (SDG) 5 on gender equality, especially target 5.4 that seeks 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 within the household and the family as nationally appropriate”. As the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated, care is an issue that cuts across all 17 SDGs. Whether it is the goal of no poverty (SDG 1), good health and well-being (SDG 3), access to education for girls (SDG 4), decent work (SDG 8) or reducing inequalities (SDG 10), addressing the gendered and unequal organization of care work is one of the necessary elements in encouraging women’s economic participation.

This report illustrates the case of the Philippines in tackling the multifaceted issue of women’s unpaid care and domestic work, the institutional arrangements needed as well as the challenges and barriers to implementation success. It begins with a macroeconomic and sociopolitical overview of the country. Within this context, it outlines the legislative frameworks, women’s machineries and formal and informal institutional mechanisms that drive or hinder the policy agenda of unpaid care. Next, the nature of women’s work in the Philippines, its gendered effects and its policies, programmes and promising initiatives to address women’s differentiated care needs are discussed. Finally, challenges and pockets of resistance to incorporating care into the policy agenda are engaged with to offer recommendations for action planning aimed at buttressing the ongoing efforts of policymakers and civil society actors in the country. In addition to examples of what the national and local government units are doing, relevant regional and global promising practices are showcased suitably.

Data for this report were compiled from various secondary sources published by the Government of the Philippines, United Nations agencies (including ESCAP, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Bank) and regional and other international organizations, such as the ASEAN Secretariat, the Asian Development Bank and Oxfam. Information-sharing sessions were conducted with senior officials of the PCW to understand the background and evolution of the women’s agenda in the country as well as the current emphasis and initiatives on women’s economic engagement, especially unpaid care and domestic work and their connection with women’s paid work.

The leadership, policy and programmatic efforts ongoing within the Philippines serve as a timely reminder to countries on what is possible as well as what the barriers and challenges to progress are. Most crucially, it serves as a reminder that the work is not yet complete, and continued efforts are needed towards a care-responsive and gender-transformative recovery.

An archipelagic country, the Philippines is rich in geographical, natural and cultural diversity. It has emerged as one of the most dynamic economies within the East Asia and Pacific region, sustaining an average annual growth rate of 6.4 per cent from 2010 to 2019 (World Bank, 2020). This has enabled it to reduce its poverty rate from 26 per cent in 2015 to 16.7 per cent in 2018 (ASEAN Secretariat, 2020a) and offer a high level of human development to its people (UNDP, 2020). Strengths that the country can leverage are its large and young population, the high level of urbanization, strong consumer demand boosted by a growing middle class and a diverse labour market. International migration and remittances from abroad form a pillar of the economy, with money being sent by more than 10 million overseas Filipino workers, which accounts for a tenth of the country's gross domestic product (Flores, 2019).

At the same time, rising wealth inequalities and high unemployment remain thorny challenges (Nordea, 2020). The Philippines is found to be more income unequal than Indonesia and Sri Lanka and even poorer neighbours like Bangladesh, India, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam (Lim, 2020). Around 30 per cent of the country's income is in the hands of the richest 10 per cent, while only 7.5 per cent of the income is with the poorest 20 per cent (ibid.). There are also wide regional disparities in economic development, with poorer regions such as Mindanao lagging behind other provinces, especially the metro city of Manila (ibid.).

Successive governments have paved the road to the success that the Philippines sees today, notwithstanding periods of political instability. The Philippine Development Plan (2017–2022) endorses a culture-sensitive, gender-sensitive and human rights-based approach in public service. A Ten-Point Socioeconomic Agenda has been adopted to contend with generational poverty by improving living standards and sustaining high economic growth. It calls for investments in human capital development and social protection programmes (ibid.).

Much of this progress is now threatened by the continuing COVID-19 pandemic. The Philippines has been particularly hard-hit despite implementing one of the longest and strictest lockdowns in the world. It is second only to Indonesia in cumulative number of cases in the South-East Asia region. To respond to the pandemic, the Government adopted a four-pillar strategy: pillar 1 consists of emergency support for vulnerable groups and individuals; pillar 2 expands medical services to fight the pandemic; pillar 3 is composed of monetary actions and programmes to finance small businesses; and pillar 4 expands social protection for vulnerable workers, including displaced and overseas Filipino workers, and aims to create jobs for sustainable economic recovery and growth (Department of Finance, n.d.).

Although the pandemic resulted in a slowing of growth and a contraction of the economy, the Philippines seems set to rebound its earlier trajectory of moving from a lower-middle-income country to an upper-middle-income country. With the world economy reopening and global recovery efforts under way, the Philippines too is gearing to move towards a better, more resilient and sustainable future. Gender equality and a green recovery are two aims that must be incorporated into these rebuilding efforts.
As noted, the Philippines has made impressive gains towards gender equality, closing as much as 78.4 per cent of the gender gap in areas of education, health, longevity and representation of women in senior managerial positions. The country has had a woman as Head of State for more than 15 of the past 50 years, much more than the global norm. Women hold 28 per cent of seats in Congress, one of the largest proportions in the ASEAN region. Moreover, 43.5 per cent of third-level positions in government were occupied by women in 2017. Despite these gains, broader gaps in women’s labour force participation, income and wages persist. On average, there is a 22 per cent gap in wages, a 31 per cent gap in income and a 36.2 per cent gap in political empowerment (WEF, 2021; Government of Philippines, 2017).

Institutional factors, such as formal laws, monitoring authorities, budgetary and resource allocations, implementing bodies, accountability metrics and normative shifts, are some of the drivers of change when it comes to progress on women’s issues. The pace and effectiveness of change can be gleaned from the extent to which the institutional climate supports a progressive policy agenda. The next sections outline both the formal and informal institutional contexts for gender mainstreaming efforts in the Philippines.

3.1 Legislative frameworks

Laws provide the foundational basis on which a culture of human rights and solidarity can be built. The Philippines has made great strides in developing a robust and comprehensive set of laws that govern various aspects of women’s lives and provide an enabling environment for policy implementation. A series of Executive Orders support the Philippine Development Plan for Women, which allows for appropriate normative commitments to be made and upheld by the State. This section amplifies some of the legislation that is material to the agenda of furthering attention to women’s unpaid care and domestic work.

The Women in Nation Building Act was passed in 1995 (Republic Act No. 7192) with the intention of promoting “the integration of women as full and equal partners of men in development and nation-building”. To enable women to attain equal rights and opportunities as men in all walks of life, the Act directed all government departments to ensure that women benefit equally from development programmes and projects. The National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) was made primarily responsible for ensuring women’s access to overseas development assistance funds. This resulted in an equality programme called Gender and Development that was designed with the help of the Canadian International Development Agency. This programme trained government staff in implementing the gender equality agenda in all their functions. The National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (now the Philippine Commission on Women), which was the nodal agency for guiding the State’s efforts on women’s welfare in the country, assisted NEDA in implementing this Act. Focus areas identified under the Act were: prioritizing rural or countryside development programmes or projects; enhancing the self-reliance of women for improving their income; ensuring women’s active participation in the planning, design, implementation, management, monitoring and evaluation of programmes; collection of sex-disaggregated data; representation in development projects in line with their representation in the population; and equal contractual rights as men in accessing credit, loans, land settlements, etc.
Box 1 outlines a unique measure under the Act to recognize the unpaid care work provided within the household by married persons, invariably the wife.

**BOX 1  Promising practice on recognition and reward for household care work**

The Women in Nation Building Act, 1995, made provision for voluntary social security coverage for married persons who devote full-time to managing the household and family affairs upon the working spouse's consent. They would be entitled to a voluntary Home Development Fund, or Pag-IBIG (Pagtutulunga–Ikaw, Bangko, Industriya at Gobyerno), Government Service Insurance System or Social Security System coverage up to the extent of one half of the salary and compensation of the working spouse. The contributions due were to be deducted from the salary of the working spouse. This unique and innovative measure can be said to be an early precursor of recognition for the value of housework and a step in the direction of rewarding the spouse with household responsibility (invariably the woman) to access benefits for her unpaid labour.

The **Solo Parents’ Welfare Act of 2000** (Republic Act No. 8972) was enacted to promote the family as the foundation of the nation, strengthen its solidarity and ensure its total development. The Act calls for a comprehensive programme of services for solo parents and their children, through the collaboration of the Department of Social Welfare and Development, the Department of Health, the Department of the Interior and Local Government, the Department of Education, Culture and Sports, the Department of the Interior and Local Government, the Department of Education, Culture and Sports, the Department of Health, the Department of the Interior and Local Government, the Department of Labor and Employment, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Justice, NEDA and the National Nutrition Council to jointly prepare annual early childhood care and development workplans.

The most wide-sweeping and comprehensive legislation is Republic Act No. 9710, otherwise known as the **Magna Carta of Women**, which was adopted in 2009. This is the country’s national translation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. It makes the State responsible for ending all discrimination against women and exhorts the Government to provide substantive equality between men and women (see box 2). In addition to governing the overall climate of human rights for women, the Magna Carta specifically provides that the “State shall take steps to review and, when necessary, amend and/or repeal existing

3 See Republic Act No. 8980: Early Childhood Care and Development Act, Philippine Commission on Women.
4 See Republic Act No. 9710: Magna Carta of Women, Philippine Commission on Women.
laws that are discriminatory to women. This allows for existing legislation, such as the Family Code, to be reviewed from a gender lens and for new policies and programmes to be prioritized, such as those pertaining to women’s care work.

Another law that was adopted in 2009 is the Expanded Exclusive Breastfeeding in the Workplace Law (Republic Act No. 10028), which promotes breastfeeding practices and rooming-in to create an environment in which the basic physical, emotional and psychological needs of mothers and infants are fulfilled.

The Expanded Seniors Citizen Act (Republic Act No. 9994) of 2010 maximizes the contribution of senior citizens to nation-building by granting benefits and special privileges. Given women’s longer life expectancy in the Philippines, this has implications both for older women as well as for women who usually provide care for older persons as paid or family carers. The Philippine Plan of Action for Senior Citizens 2012–2016 focused on advancing the health and well-being of older persons (Government of Philippines, 2017). Given how the care of dependants, including older persons, falls on women in many families, this law has important implications for women’s overall unpaid care work.

The Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10354) is yet another piece of gender-responsive legislation. This law ensures that reproductive health becomes universally accessible. It empowers the Department of Health and local government units to ensure availability of reproductive supplies, give training to

### BOX 2 Republic Act No. 9710: Magna Carta of Women


Salient features of the law include:

- Increasing the number of women in third-level positions in government to achieve a 50–50 gender balance, while the composition of women in all levels of development planning and programme implementation will be at least 40 per cent.
- Leave benefits of two months with full pay based on gross monthly compensation for women employees who undergo surgery caused by gynaecological disorders, provided that they have rendered continuous aggregate employment service of at least six months for the past 12 months.
- Non-discrimination in employment in the field of military, police and other similar services according to the same promotional privileges and opportunities as their men counterparts, including pay increases, additional benefits and awards, based on competency and quality of performance.
- Provision for equal access to education, scholarships and training; and discrimination, especially due to pregnancy out of marriage, shall be outlawed.
- Non-discriminatory and non-derogatory portrayal of women in media and film to raise the consciousness of the general public in recognizing the dignity of women and the role and contribution of women in the family, community and society through the strategic use of mass media.
- Equal status given to men and women on the titling of land and issuance of stewardship contracts and patents.

Source: See Republic Act No. 9710: Magna Carta of Women, Philippine Commission on Women.

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5 See the women’s priority legislative agenda of the Philippine Commission on Women at Women’s Priority Legislative Agenda, Philippine Commission on Women, pcw.gov.ph.

6 See Republic Act No. 10028: Breastfeeding Promotion in the Workplace, or the Expanded Exclusive Breastfeeding in the Workplace Law, ilo.org.
medical providers on new contraceptive technologies and undertake the implementation of various programmes, such as the Family Planning Program and the National Safe Motherhood Program. There has been a steady decline in the maternal mortality ratio over the past decade, with 80 per cent of total live births occurring in established health facilities and 90 per cent of pregnant women being attended to by a skilled health professional (Government of Philippines, 2017).

Another important piece of legislation is the Batas Kasambahay (Domestic Workers Act) passed in 2013 (Republic Act No. 10361) that addresses the representation and decent work conditions of domestic workers. This law emerged from ratification of ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189). This landmark legislation ensures that domestic workers, the majority of whom are women, are treated equitably and given the same recognition as formal sector workers. The law provides for regulating the conditions of work of domestic workers, such as monthly minimum wage, daily and weekly rest periods, annual service incentive leave with pay, 13 months of pay and social security coverage (Government of Philippines, 2017). The Government also signed a bilateral agreement on the employment of household service workers with Saudi Arabia to protect its migrant care workers.

A most recent addition to this mosaic of laws has been the passage of the Safe Spaces Act (Republic Act No. 11313), in 2019. This Act aims to define gender-based sexual harassment in streets, public spaces, online, workplaces and educational and training institutions by providing protective measures and appropriate penalties.

### 3.2 Women’s machineries

The Philippine Commission on Women (PCW), formerly known as the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women, has been the nodal state machinery for advancing women’s rights in the country. The PCW is the primary policymaking and coordinating body on women and gender equality concerns. It builds on a long history of women’s movements and feminism in the Philippines. It has served as a catalyst for the country’s efforts towards gender and development, gender mainstreaming and the advancement of women in all spheres for gender equity. It has implemented and monitored the Magna Carta of Women since 2009.

As the main oversight agency, the PCW maintains a gender-responsive focus in all national development planning and coordinating with other planning bodies and line agencies. It is the lead advocate for women’s social, political and economic advancement and capacity-building and for strengthening institutional mechanisms for gender mainstreaming efforts. Through its review of legislation and policy studies, the monitoring of implementation of laws and policies and by undertaking pilot projects, the PCW has a pivotal role in shaping the progress of women’s equality and rights.

Support for gender and development policies and additional programmes is high within the Government. Budgetary support nearly doubled between 2013 and 2015, amounting to 105.75 billion Philippine pesos. A recent review of the gender and development plans and budgets of national government agencies, state universities and colleges and government-owned or controlled corporations shows that 333 agencies, or 67 per cent of the 497 listed agencies, submitted gender and development plans and budgets. The top-five agencies with the highest gender and development expenditure for FY2020 were the Department of Health, the Department of Public Works and Highways, the Philippine National Police, the Philippine Army and the Department of Labour and Employment (PCW, 2021).

The PCW hosts Gender and Development-related webinars, training programmes and learning resources to equip line agencies and local government staff. Some notable initiatives under the auspices of the PCW include the Gender-Responsive Economic Transformation of Women (GREAT)-2, which is a project to improve the sustainability, productivity and competitiveness of women’s microenterprises; to organize campaigns to end violence against women; and to enhance the role of women in the military, environmental management programmes and the digital economy. The PCW also tracks the women’s priority legislative agenda and has compiled a compendium of Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment indicators.

The Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (GEWE) Plan 2019–2025 covers four years of the Philippine Development Plan 2017–2022 and the remaining years of the Philippine Plan for Gender-Responsive Development 1995–2025. The GEWE Plan indicators are organized along five strategic goal areas: women’s social development rights; women’s economic empowerment; gender in security, justice
and peace; gender-responsive governance; and gender in environment and climate change. Under each of these goal areas, the indicators are further clustered into 17 sectors and thematic areas. These specific indicators for each thematic, sectoral and priority area target gender mainstreaming efforts at different levels of results: impact, outcome or output level (PCW, 2019). Efforts are ongoing to update the GEWE Plan to include unpaid care and domestic work indicators in the results matrix.

Local government units are another important state apparatus for implementing gender and development policies and service provision. The Mandanas Ruling, a historic Supreme Court decision in 2018 and confirmed in 2019, makes provision for raising the share of national government tax revenue transferred to local governments as of 2022 (World Bank, 2021a). Previously, the share of internal national revenue allocation for local governments was 40 per cent, which was insufficient to provide good-quality, complete and sustainable delivery of basic public services for most localities. The Mandanas Ruling raises internal revenue allotments to local government units in 2022 by 27.61 per cent. This represents 1.08 trillion pesos (4.8 per cent of GDP, which is up from 3.5 per cent in 2021). It provides the local government units with greater fiscal independence, bigger development funds for more projects, room for innovation and substantial contribution in private–public partnerships and joint ventures (Philexport Cebu, 2021). This increased fiscal space will need to be accompanied with capacity-building and support to enable the local government units to meet their service mandates to local populations. Given the regional disparities in existing infrastructure and service provision among cities in the Philippines, the new ruling also will require equipping local government unit officials with the skills and knowledge to carry out their enhanced responsibilities.

The Department for the Interior and Local Government, as an overseeing authority, along with the PCW, the Department of Budget and Management and NEDA, issued a Joint Memorandum Circular in 2013 and updated it in 2016 and 2020 to ensure that gender perspectives are mainstreamed across local government unit plans, programmes and projects (DILG, 2020). However, and as already highlighted, the readiness and capability within local government units means that the ability to mainstream gender and development plans is an area of concern.

Civil society actors represent another avenue of advocacy for change within the Philippines. The PCW has over the years developed strong partnerships with non-state actors, mostly the large international organizations, such as the Canadian International Development Agency, ESCAP, Oxfam and UN Women. These organizations have been staunch advocates for the unpaid care and domestic work agenda. They have also been instrumental in providing financial and research aid to the PCW. The combination of civil society organizations and development aid agencies creates an inclusive approach and strengthens the overall institutional framework in the Philippines, within which the goals of addressing unpaid care work can be furthered.

3.3 Social and cultural norms

Despite an enabling legislative and socioeconomic context, female labour force participation in the Philippines has hovered around 45 per cent for the past two decades (ILO, Investing in Women and Australian Aid, 2020). This proportion is the lowest among ASEAN Member States. The age group of 25–29 years among women shows the sharpest decline, ostensibly due to marriage and childbearing (NEDA, 2019). Occupational segregation of women can be noted from the predominance of women workers (up 76 per cent of workers) in the services sector relative to men (at 45 per cent) and only 10 per cent in manufacturing, relative to 25 per cent for men (ILO, Investing in Women and Australian Aid, 2020).

Women are also overrepresented in care work, such as among domestic workers and international migrant care workers. The data point to the prevalence of a sociocultural norm that seems to promote a gendered division of labour that naturalizes care as women’s work. A recent study provides sex-disaggregated estimates of National Transfer Accounts and National Time Transfer Accounts for the Philippines (Abrigo and Francisco-Abrigo, 2019). The study found that men spend a larger portion of their time on paid market work while women devote equal or more of their time on unpaid work at home. This dichotomy in men’s and women’s roles was found to persist across the lifecycle and starts early in age. The researchers noted that by age 15, girls spend an average of nine hours of their time every week on housework, compared to an average of four hours by boys. This indicates the socialization of gendered norms and attitudes begins early within families.
However, green shoots of change in mindsets can be detected. A Social Norms, Attitudes and Practices survey was conducted among urban millennials in Indonesia, the Philippines and Viet Nam in May 2020. Data from the Philippines found that 57 per cent of the current generation share childcare, compared with 30 per cent of the previous generation and, promisingly for the future, 92 per cent of the future generation women reported being inclined to share childcare with men. This figure was 82 per cent among future generation men, which bodes well for shifting gender norms around childcare (Investing in Women, 2020). Shifting norms around breadwinning have been slower to change, with 36 per cent sharing the load equally now and 51 per cent of men and 81 per cent of women of the future generation saying they would be willing to share breadwinning. Larger segments of those surveyed in the Philippines were found leaning towards a more progressive and equal distribution of responsibilities among men and women than the respondents from Indonesia and Viet Nam. The progressive segments had a relatively large proportion of single mothers, compared with the more traditional segment that had more married or partnered mothers, who still think women are better suited to childcare and had no strong wish for fathers to do more (ibid.).

Social media campaigns have been used as a means to shift mindsets. A campaign targeting urban commuters and social media users promoted messages encouraging men to share in housework, thus seeking to normalize women's economic role. The campaign reached 2 million users in nine months and the importance of unpaid care work was recognized by the local government units in Tacloban and Salcedo cities in Eastern Visayas through ordinances. Oxfam's WE-Care programme evaluation showed that participation in social norm interventions incentivized men to increase hours spent on care as their main activity, compared with men who were not involved in the social norms activities (Oxfam, 2021).

The overall institutional context in the country has led to the observation that despite having "a responsive justice system, the Philippines remains a model nation only on paper" (Alqaseer and others, 2021, p. 67). The next section explores how the laws have impacted on the actual performance of unpaid care and domestic work in the Philippines.

**BOX 3** Media campaign to shift gendered mindsets on the division of housework

Oxfam Philippines has taken steps to recognize and encourage men to step up and respond to the call for equality in doing unpaid care work with their respective partner. The webinar “Usapang Gawaing Bahay sa Panahon ng Pandemya” (“Talks on Housework in the Times of a Pandemic”) was launched alongside the #FlexYourHouseband Challenge. The challenge aims to honour men who stand for equality. In this way, Oxfam Philippines is empowering men to talk about their experiences and learnings as husbands and fathers sharing in care work at home during the pandemic.

By promoting campaigns to celebrate Fathers' Day and the sharing of housework, Oxfam Philippines has committed to creating a positive shift in the way people see gender roles by highlighting the importance of sharing unpaid care work equally in the home.

The growth in the productive market economy has been made possible by the unpaid and underpaid work of caregivers who are largely women and girls (Enríquez, 2018). The unequal distribution of unpaid care and domestic work is found to lead to time and income poverty for women (Zacharias, 2017) and have negative effects on their health and well-being (Chopra and Zambelli, 2017). In this context of greater responsibility for unpaid care work, women's participation in paid work can serve to intensify their workloads and not necessarily increase their autonomy or empowerment (Pearson, 2004). Underinvestment in the public provision of physical and social care infrastructure leads to an overemphasis on families and households filling the gap to care for dependants (children, the sick, older persons and persons with disabilities). This has been noted in the literature as “gendered familism” (Palriwala and Neetha, 2009) and has led to the development of global care chains (Yeates, 2012). Therefore, in addition to creating decent work opportunities in paid work, women need to be supported with structural investments in childcare and access to water, fuel, electricity, good roads and safe transport (Chopra, Nazneen and Krishnan, 2019).

To assess the comprehensiveness and effectiveness of policy responses to women’s differentiated care needs, the recent ESCAP research promotes a conceptual framework represented in figure 1. As the diagram shows, the care economy comprises both paid and unpaid care. Unpaid care more specifically consists of the care of children, the sick, older persons and persons with disabilities. This has been noted in the literature as “gendered familism” (Palriwala and Neetha, 2009) and has led to the development of global care chains (Yeates, 2012). Therefore, in addition to creating decent work opportunities in paid work, women need to be supported with structural investments in childcare and access to water, fuel, electricity, good roads and safe transport (Chopra, Nazneen and Krishnan, 2019).

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FIGURE 1  Conceptual framework for care-sensitive and gender-differentiated policies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Care economy</th>
<th>Moderating influences</th>
<th>Differentiated care policy responses</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>UNPAID CARE WORK</strong></td>
<td>• Childcare • Care of older persons and persons with disabilities • Care of sick persons • Domestic work • Community care</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PAID CARE WORK</strong></td>
<td>• Health • Personal care • Education • Domestic help</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Enabling factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Macroeconomic policies</th>
<th>Social protection policies</th>
<th>Labour policies</th>
<th>Migration policies</th>
<th>Digital-inclusion policies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Recognition of care as foundational

Source: Adapted from ESCAP, 2021a, p. 14.
persons, sick persons and persons with disabilities who are not independent, household and domestic chores as well voluntary community service. The time, extent, quality and outcomes of care provision are mediated by many factors, such as individual household characteristics, country-specific contexts and emerging socioeconomic trends.

Women's intersectional identity across multiple axes, such as living in rural areas, in low-income households, belonging to certain ethnic groups, having certain disabilities or being migrant workers, can further accentuate their marginalization in policy responses. The extent to which policy responses take into account women's differentiated care needs determines the extent to which a country can create care-responsive and gender-transformative outcomes.

The framework identifies four care policy categories (box 4) as well as six levers of change (detailed in figure 2) that enable the implementation of policy measures to create real-world transformation. Policy measures addressing care needs are identified as care-sensitive, while policy measures that specifically address women's practical and strategic gender needs can be said to be gender-differentiated. The recognition that care is foundational to human life forms the bedrock, along with an enabling legislative and policy environment across domains of the labour market, social protection, migration, digital inclusion and the macroeconomy.

Care work impacts women's roles in the household and within the community. A greater responsibility and higher intensity of household work, care of dependants or community care work results in reduced labour market engagement, greater presence in the informal economy and greater physical and mental health depletion. This requires a comprehensive approach to addressing all aspects of the care economy with policies that acknowledge women's multiple and intersecting vulnerabilities. The care policy framework proposed here gives policymakers the starting point for valuing and supporting the unpaid care economy.

The rest of this section highlights the positive steps taken by the Philippines in recognizing, valuing and redistributing women's unpaid care work. These policy measures signal the commitment of the Philippine Government to the care economy, but they also underscore the gaps in policy provisions that still need to be bridged. Shifting the needle from discourse to action requires putting care firmly on the policy implementation agenda. For example, eight local government units have passed a Women's Economic Empowerment and Care Ordinance (WEE-Care Ordinances) – a law that makes it mandatory to generate data and address unpaid care in all planning, budgeting and programming activities (Hall and Aranas, 2020). This covers a range of areas, such as housing and land use, community-based conflict resolution, access to care, supporting infrastructure and services and programmes to help women enter the labour market (Oxfam, 2021).

**Box 4 Care policy categories to address unpaid care and domestic work**

*Care infrastructure* — water, sanitation, energy, transport, food services, health care infrastructure for persons who are sick (HIV patients, COVID-19 patients) or living with a disability and pregnant women.

*Care-related social protections* — cash transfers, cash for care, vouchers, tax benefits, non-contributory pension schemes.

*Care services* — childcare, older person care and care provisions for persons with disability or illness through the State or the market.

*Employment-related care policies* — sick leave, family-friendly working arrangements, flexitime, career breaks, sabbaticals, severance pay, employer-funded or contributory social protection schemes like maternity and parental leave benefits.

Source: ESCAP, 2021a, p. 15.

### 4.1 Women's time use in unpaid care and domestic work

Keeping in line with the Beijing Platform for Action mandates on recognizing the unpaid care and domestic work performed by women, the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB) of the Philippines (now the Philippine Statistics Authority) conducted a series of studies in the 1990s to measure and include the unremunerated work done by women within the System of National Accounts. The NSCB conducted a study to set up satellite accounts between 1990 and 1997 on the contribution of women to the economy. Additionally, some independent studies on measuring women's unpaid work were carried out on a small scale beginning in 1992. These studies endeavoured to put a monetary value on
women’s unpaid work, arriving at the estimation that unpaid care work contributes up to 37 per cent of GDP. In 1998, the Canadian International Development Agency funded a project related to the valuation of unpaid work. This led to the initial studies of the NSCB being updated in 1999 to include 1998 estimates. The results were presented at the National Convention of Statistics in 1999. This early work by the NSCB led to the design of a pilot time-use survey conducted in 1999–2000.

Time-use surveys are an established methodology for capturing data on women’s unpaid work, especially care work. This was the objective of the pilot time-use survey carried out by the NSCB in collaboration with the then-National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (now the PCW) and the then-National Statistics Office (now the Philippine Statistics Authority). It was a small-scale survey involving two rural and two urban areas covering only 240 households in Batangas Province and Quezon City. It employed the diary and interview method and time-use classification of activities as set out by the ILO. The pilot survey aimed to: (i) generate information on the socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of the members of the household aged 10 years and older; (ii) provide information on their activity patterns and generate qualitative and quantitative data needed in the estimation of the value of unpaid work as well as information on use of time of both women and men; and (iii) identify the factors that influence a person’s choice of time use among subgroups of the population.

The intention of the pilot was to test the survey instruments and methodology and develop a small-scale database of responses against which to fine-tune the time-use surveys for national use. Given the pilot nature of the data, the NSCB was hesitant to widely publish the results and hoped to conduct a full-fledged time-use survey instead. However, the cost of a national level time-use survey was found to be prohibitively high, and the idea remained in the proposal stage.8 The questionnaire was found to be lengthy and tedious for respondents to fill in or keep track of the time spent in each activity. Enumerators who were deployed to conduct the Labour Force Survey found the additional load of carrying out the time-use survey cumbersome and time-consuming. The increased workload, training, travelling, printing, testing and publication expenses translated into higher costs for the project. Cabegin and Gaddi (2019) reported that the cost of the 2000 time-use survey was 700,000 pesos for 240 households. If expanded to a national survey sample, the estimated cost would be 1.1 billion pesos for four rounds of the Labour Force Survey in a year.

In April 2019, the Philippine Statistics Authority added a section to the regular Labour Force Survey to collect time-use data that uses stylized questions for a predetermined list of activities under own-use production work and unpaid housework. This rider survey collected information from all household members aged 5 years and older for time spent in minutes doing such activities over the previous seven days (Cabegin and Gaddi, 2019). The authors argued that the diary approach used in the 2000 survey is a more accurate method for data collection than the 2019 survey method. Without accurate measurement of the full range of activities and time spent on unpaid care work, it is often made “invisible”, resulting in the policy focus shifting to economic growth and market work without factoring in the role and contribution of unpaid care work in the economy.

Abrigo and Francisco-Abriro (2019) estimated the gendered division of labour in unpaid care work and home production (childcare, elder care and housework) using the 2000 time-use survey data. They estimated that women in their mid-30s spend on average 24 hours per week on housework alone, while the comparable figure for men is just eight hours per week. Given the predominance of multigenerational households in the Philippines, the care of children is found to be “double-humped”, whereby children are cared for by parents as well as by grandparents. Women spend more time on childcare as well as elder care than men do. Adding in their market work means women end up working more hours than men (Abrigo and Francisco-Abriro, 2019, pp. 7–8). The total workday is therefore longer for women than for men. As a result, women have less leisure time than men. And although women do more total work, they still have less access to money, measured in terms of income or ownership of assets. Similar studies have noted that marriage and childbearing are associated with a significant decline in female labour force participation, and statistical issues in capturing women’s contribution to the economy lead to the underestimation of women’s work (Cabegin and Gaddi, 2019).

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8 This information was gathered from documents developed by NEDA and the former National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women and through interviews with PCW officials.
To address the growing need for evidence on unpaid care work, Oxfam Philippines partnered with the PCW, UN Women, WeEmpowerAsia and others to carry out a National Household Care Survey as part of their WE-Care programme. A baseline survey was first conducted in 2016 and then expanded in 2017 (Rost and Koissy-Kpein, 2018). Then a more in-depth survey conducted across more locations was completed in January–March 2021. As explained in box 5, women were found to be performing care work for 13 hours per day. This had not changed much from Oxfam's WE-Care survey in 2017 (when women performed a care activity for at least 12 hours per day), and it was only marginally higher due to the pandemic conditions. What had shifted is the number of hours put in by men, which has gone up, from 5.4 in 2017 to 8 hours in 2021. This is a significant change, perhaps brought on by the lockdowns and other containment measures during the pandemic. Even if a temporary change, this nevertheless gives a message of hope for change. The larger sample size and wider coverage in the 2021 survey make the findings more robust and generalizable for the Philippines.

While the 2017 survey covered only a few low-income communities in rural areas, the 2021 survey covered eight regions and collected data on the time use of men, women, young people and children within households. It allowed comparison between urban and rural trends as well as before and after onset of the pandemic. By asking questions about the use of labour-saving equipment and care infrastructure, the survey allows conclusions to be drawn on the drudgery and difficulty of household work, especially during the pandemic. An important focus of the survey is on social norms change. It attempts to capture cases of positive deviance, for example, more men were involved in household work and not only in water collection but also with cooking.

The pandemic has demonstrated an opportunity to increase women's economic participation as a result of greater availability of home-based work options. Women have become the providers in some families, while men, who had lost their employment, have been obliged to do more household chores and care work. Thus, flexible work arrangements that allow men and women to combine their paid work with care responsibilities may present an area of opportunity for policymakers.

BOX 5  Findings from the National Household Care Survey 2021

The National Household Care Survey was conducted January–March 2021 by Oxfam Philippines, in partnership with the Philippine Commission on Women, UN Women, WeEmpowerAsia and other partners. Covering 1,177 individuals from randomly selected households across eight regional provinces of the Philippines, the survey covered both urban and rural communities in Cagayan, Metro Manila, Masbate, Eastern Samar, Cebu, Maguindanao, North Cotabato and Sultan Kudarat.

Though not a time-use survey, it is a quantitative survey measuring average hours women and men spend in different activities, the underlying social norms and attitudes, how access to and use of infrastructure, equipment and services relate to unpaid care work activities and hours spent and the influence of governmental schemes and provisions on unpaid care tasks. It was administered at the household level with a household module asking women and other members different sets of questions.

Women spend up to 13 hours a day on unpaid care work, including supervisory care activities, compared to only eight hours for men. Of them, as many as seven hours are spent in multitasking at least two care activities simultaneously. The study noted that this was negatively impacting the health and well-being of women who had experienced injury, illness or disability from doing care work in the previous six months.

On a hopeful note, the survey found a dramatic increase in the number of hours put in by men towards unpaid care and domestic work, compared to their 2017 survey findings. This indicates that the pandemic has had an impact on men's care work since they have been forced to stay at home. However, this may be a temporary shift and the perception that care work is primarily a woman's responsibility continues to prevail.

The data from the 2021 National Household Care Survey do not supplant but rather underscore the need for an official national time-use survey that can take forward the work piloted in 2000 (see the section on challenges and recommendations for more discussion).

The next section examines the nature of policy responses adopted across the four care policy categories of the conceptual framework presented in this report.

### 4.2 Care policy responses

While the previous section established the need for data and evidence on the nature and extent of women’s unpaid care work, this section elucidates the various policy responses that the Government has undertaken as a result of advocacy efforts by the PCW and civil society partners.

#### 4.2.1 CARE INFRASTRUCTURE

The provision of care infrastructure spans micro infrastructure that addresses household care tasks as well as social care infrastructure, such as health centres, hospitals, schools, transport and food provisioning. For example, the Department of Education’s Pedals and Paddles Program, launched in 2015, provided 35,374 bicycles and 1,216 boats for learners in far-flung areas to be able to access school (Government of Philippines, 2017).

Installation of water pumps, solar panels and solar-powered lamps, bridges that enable safe access to schools, water and sanitation facilities to support health and well-being of communities, “market on wheels” for easy access to goods and investment in public parks for children and reproductive health care services can be said to be some of the care-related infrastructure initiatives taken by the Government.

The Rice Research Institute has developed labour- and energy-saving devices for cleaning rice, and the Philippine Centre for Postharvest Development and Mechanization has developed care-sensitive equipment that is lighter and easier for use by women when harvesting of high-value crops, such as cacao and coffee. As many as nine projects launched by the Centre since onset of the pandemic meet the Harmonized Gender and Development guidelines. These are examples of care-sensitive and gender-responsive care policy measures.

#### 4.2.2 CARE-RELATED SOCIAL PROTECTIONS

Noteworthy features of the social protection system in the Philippines are the Pantawid Pamilya Pilipino Program (4Ps), a flagship national social assistance programme; the National Household Targeting System for Poverty Reduction; and the more recent Social Security Act of 2018 (Republic Act No. 11199). Another complementary programme is the Sustainable Livelihood Program, which is a capability-building initiative to provide opportunities to increase the productivity of livelihood assets of poor and vulnerable households and thus increase their socioeconomic well-being as part of the sustainability aspect of the 4Ps.

The national 4Ps is a conditional cash transfer programme that provides financial assistance to families in poverty in exchange for compliance with certain health, education and family welfare expectations, especially those with children aged up to 18 years. It represents the Government’s national poverty reduction strategy. One of the conditionalities include a Family Development session that discusses relationships between husbands and wives, women’s rights and home management, among other topics. The programme now requires fathers as well as mothers to attend these sessions and has established a target of a minimum 40 per cent involvement of fathers. This is an example of how care-related social protections can bring about a norm change as well as redistribute the responsibility of care.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development employs a convergence strategy to identify who and where the poor households are to maximize resources and the timely, effective and efficient delivery of services. Eligible poor household beneficiaries receive health and education cash grants, conditional on children’s attendance in school and receipt of regular immunizations, the mothers’ availing of health care services and parents’ attendance in the Family Development sessions. Complementing those provisions is the Supplemental Feeding Program to enhance the food intake of children aged 3–12 years by providing them hot meals from produce grown in

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9 See PHilMech Gender and Development.
10 See Sustainable Livelihood Program, About, dswd.gov.ph.
11 See Pantawid Pamilya, dswd.gov.ph.
school vegetable gardens and thus to work towards the health and nutrition-related SDGs (Government of Philippines, 2017).

Household members who have retired, are senior citizens or are physically infirmed or have a disability that leaves them dependent on others can afford to live with dignity as a result of the Social Security System. Contributory schemes for social benefits include the Government Service Insurance System for public sector employees and the Social Security System for private sector workers. The Social Security Act of 2018 replaces the previous Act of 1997 and makes provision for unemployment or involuntary separation benefits for the first time. It mandates coverage of overseas Filipino workers, the establishment of a Provident Fund exclusive to Social Security System members, legislated adjustments in the membership premium and monthly salary credits. It endeavours to be a law that truly ensures universal, equitable and viable social security for Filipino workers in the private sector, domestically and overseas.\(^\text{12}\)

### 4.2.3 CARE SERVICES

In such a large and young population as the Philippines has, the care of children can be the biggest constraint on women’s time. As early as 1990, Republic Act No. 6972 made provision for the establishment of day-care centres in every barangay, or village (smallest political unit), to ensure the holistic development of children.\(^\text{13}\) One of the provisions of this law under section 3b is the “care of children of working mothers during the day and, where feasible, care for children up to 6 years of age when the mother is working at night”. Executive Order No. 340, issued by former President Fidel V. Ramos in 1997, directed all national government agencies and government-owned and controlled corporations to have day-care services on their premises for children (younger than 5 years) of their employees. These centres, also called child-minding centres, are considered as state-funded, and the Gender and Development budgets are usually available for such investment. Onsite workplace creches for families who lack familial or paid care support have been found to be crucial in supporting women’s continuity of employment.

The Early Childhood Care and Development Act mentioned in section 3.1 provides for comprehensive, integrative and sustainable childcare services via a day-care programme, parent effectiveness services, child-minding centres, family day-care or home-based care and parent–child development programmes. These are supported by the local government units through the construction of basic infrastructure, provision of facilities, materials and equipment and compensation for the service providers. Guidelines for the accreditation of day-care centres and day-care workers have also been framed.

Despite the helpful legislative action, implementation of day-care and other childcare services remains weak. Families continue to rely on relatives either within multigenerational households or living nearby to look after their children. Rich and middle-class families often hire domestic helpers or nannies to assist in childcare, while poor households do not have the same level of accessible or quality childcare. This deficit has been further heightened by the shutting of the centres due to the COVID-19 restrictions. An added challenge in the implementation of childcare services is the conflation of education outcomes with care outcomes. This has resulted in a growing emphasis among barangays to provide quality education and hire more trained teachers, while the focus on the younger age groups needing care gets less attention.

Apart from childcare, the care of older persons and other vulnerable populations are also within the purview of the Department of Social Welfare Development. The Philippine Plan of Action for Senior Citizens (2011–2016) promoted active ageing and gender-responsive community-based approaches to encourage the meaningful participation of senior citizens in decision-making processes, both in the context of family and community. The plan also promoted the financial independence and community-based health care services for senior citizens (HelpAge Asia, 2021). The population of older persons is the fastest-growing demographic in the Philippines, currently making up 8.5 per cent of the total population. This is predicted to nearly double, to 16.5 per cent, by 2050 (HelpAge Asia, 2021). More older people are expected to be living in poverty, and with women’s longevity exceeding that of men, the welfare of older women is an emerging area for policy attention.

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4.2.4 EMPLOYMENT-RELATED CARE POLICIES

The Labour Code sets out the general framework within which employment conditions of male and female workers are regulated. The Philippines offers 105 days of maternity leave, and the Paternity Law (Republic Act No. 8187) of 1996 provides for seven days of paternity leave for male employees in private and government-owned enterprises. Box 6 highlights some unique aspects of these leave policies.

Government agencies also provided a certain number of special leave days for milestones, such as birthdays and funerals. Victims of violence are entitled to 10 days of paid leave time. Additionally, the Breastfeeding Law (see section 3.1) exhorts employers to make a physical safe space for women to breastfeed their children, and workplace day-care provisions are also required, especially in government offices. Another care-related policy under the Magna Carta of Women is the provision of gynaecological leave time as a special benefit for female employees of up to two months with full pay based on gross monthly compensation following surgery caused by gynaecological disorders.

What is important to assess among employment-related care policies is the extent to which caring responsibilities of both male and female workers are addressed, for example, through flexible work arrangements and payment for sick leave and other extended caregiver leave time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BOX 6</th>
<th>Maternity and paternity leave policies in the Philippines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Expanded Maternity Leave Act (Republic Act No. 11210) increases the maternity leave period to 105 days for female workers with pay and an option to extend for an additional 30 days without pay. It also grants extension of 15 days for solo mothers and for other purposes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The law also allows that a female worker entitled to maternity leave benefits may, at her option, allocate up to seven days of said benefits to the child’s father, whether or not the same is married to the female worker. In the absence of the father, the female employee may still allocate said maternity leave time to an alternate caregiver who is either a relative within the fourth degree of consanguinity or a current partner, regardless of gender, who shares with her the same household.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republic Act No. 8187, or the Paternity Leave Act of 1996, grants seven days paternity leave to the father of the child if he is married to the female worker. Thus, a married new father can enjoy as much as 14 days leave (seven days paternity leave and seven days under Republic Act No. 11210). An unmarried new father, on the other hand, may enjoy only seven days allocated leave.</td>
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</table>

Section 5

Challenges to furthering the care agenda

Section 3 demonstrates the detailed formal and informal institutional context within which the agenda of unpaid care work is housed. A plethora of laws are already in place in the Philippines. Laws provide a regulatory framework and an overarching normative commitment within which policies and programmes are to be designed and targeted to different segments of women as per their varying care needs. However, as section 4.2 explains, implementation of these laws, the extent of coverage and the quality, affordability and accessibility of care-related provisions and services remains low. Despite a good legislative environment, weak implementation or absence of provisions due to insufficient budgetary allocations, inadequate infrastructure, lack of human resources, etc. can negate the effects of a strong legal framework. Laws, in the face of weak implementation, are then tantamount only to being paper tigers.

Implementation gaps and accountability for service provision continues to remain a challenge in the Philippines. There is need for mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of laws and how they have contributed to improving the well-being and rights enjoyment of women. While the Magna Carta allows for laws to be reviewed and revamped as per the evolving needs of Filipino women, there is a need to determine the extent to which these laws have been successfully utilized by citizens. Failures in implementation or coverage of women due to absence of registration or delays in disbursements under relevant social protection programmes for persons with disabilities, health insurance, access to health services or access to pay for work schemes further intensify their marginalization.

This points to the second barrier to incorporating the unpaid care work agenda into policymaking: lack of data. The absence of evidence is often confused with evidence of absence. The invisibility of women’s work has been repeatedly documented by feminist economists. Early efforts in the Philippines to develop a pilot time-use survey point to the recognition of the importance of data-backed policies. In the absence of “hard facts”, it becomes more difficult to get the attention and support of policymakers on the need to invest in unpaid care work. Policymakers also hold gendered assumptions and beliefs. Unless the assumptions and beliefs are challenged by evidence, it is likely that gendered notions of care work being natural for women will impede the space for challenging the status quo. It is universally acknowledged that women the world over do more unpaid care work than men. To contextualize this general fact for the Philippines requires country-level and region-specific data to shape substantive policy.

Time-use surveys reveal not just the number of hours spent on various care activities by either gender but nuances of when, where and how this work is carried out and in combination with what other activities. Time-use survey findings can give deeper insights for the design of social protection programmes and the provision of care services for children, older persons and sick persons. Such findings are also vital for developing holistic work–life balance and labour market interventions. The underestimation of women’s work and labour force participation in statistical data (Cabegin and Gaddi, 2019) can be illustrated as follows: housewives and mothers who are not engaged in paid employment or who work irregularly for a few hours in a week or do paid work from the home or work for an association or
cooperative are likely to report themselves as full-time housewives. This results in their being excluded from the active labour force. The simultaneity of care activities is another hurdle in accurate measurement and estimation. It is often difficult for women to separate their time spent in care work while engaged in home-based market work.

Moreover, the particularities of women’s location across intersections of rural and urban areas or informal and formal economy or having disabilities, makes the measurement of care work and capturing its extent and impacts more challenging. Caring for persons with disabilities has a threefold impact on women: (i) as carers of persons with disabilities within households (especially children), women need to be supported with public infrastructure, care allowances and institutional care services; (ii) as women with disabilities who themselves experience marginalization and discrimination more acutely on account of their gender as well as disability; and (iii) as women with disabilities who are caregivers within their household (Luna, 2020). Such women are often left out of interventions, for example, those aimed at sexual and reproductive health or gender-based violence. Another example of the need for an intersectional focus is the difficulty in crafting policies and programmes for women in the informal economy as compared to the formal economy.

Another difficulty in gaining the attention of a critical mass of policymakers is the paucity of champions within the government. As the prior sections point out, women’s political representation in senior ministerial berths remains low in the Philippines. This means women’s limited voices need to be amplified by male colleagues within the establishment. There is an urgent need to convince more legislators of the urgency of the issue of unpaid care work. This would aid the country to make progress not only on gender equality but also achieve other SDGs. While the Department for Social Welfare and Development has emerged as the most responsive on the Gender and Development agenda, it is imperative for the PCW to build liaisons and partnerships with different government departments and agencies, especially at the local levels. Identifying strategic line ministries is crucial for developing a whole-of-government approach to policymaking because care is a cross-cutting theme.
Resource barriers pose another significant challenge, especially given the tightening of fiscal space in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although the Mandanas Ruling (see section 3.2) offers a ray of hope, there is an urgent need to equip local officials with the right tools and funds and also progressive and gender-transformative ideas and policy suggestions. The pandemic has hit close to home for many state officials at a personal and professional level, but the discourse of care needs to be mainstreamed and brought to centre stage in policy efforts. It requires an intersectional approach to account for the ethnic and religious diversity within the Philippines as well as to cater to the poorly served indigenous communities and islands.

And last but not least, the biggest challenge to moving the needle in terms of recognizing and redistributing women’s unpaid care work comes from entrenching social and cultural norms. Filipinos are raised to take care of their families. Someone not caring for family members is likely to be termed lazy or irresponsible, especially the wife not fulfilling the traditional duties. An inequitable distribution of maternity leave of 105 days but paternity leave of seven days reinforces the female caregiver stereotype and entrenches women's motherhood roles and identity. Even care infrastructure projects, such as a water system, are insufficient to bring about real change until the underlying mindsets and attitudes towards water collection or housework as women’s work are challenged and altered. Not only is the larger community or the family complicit in perpetuating these stereotypes, often women themselves resist the redistribution of what they see as their care work. For example, women sometimes resist the use of childcare services due to the requirement of dressing their children, transporting them to a centre, picking them up again, bathing and feeding them adding to their tasks rather than as freeing up their time for market work. These women may tend to opt for home-based work where they can combine their care responsibilities with childcare, but this can serve to trap them in low-income, insecure and precarious work.

The geographical makeup of this archipelagic nation results in a diversity of cultural norms and practices with different levels of male domination and patriarchal values imposed on women's roles. An additional challenge is the Philippines’ unique geographical composition that presents difficulties in crafting tailor-made strategies for each region or barangay to address the unequal distribution of care work. These complexities must be borne in mind by policymakers attempting to address the issue of women’s work comprehensively. The next section turns to the task of making specific policy recommendations for the Philippines.
The previous sections of this report trace the evolution of the unpaid care work agenda and provide a historical and contextually sensitive understanding of the issue in the Philippines. The discussion now turns to the crucial question of what needs to be done to ensure that gains of the past do not lose their momentum. While the ASEAN Comprehensive Framework on Care Economy lays out six strategic priority areas across various dimensions of the care economy, including disaster resilience, digital transformation and care for the environment, this section focuses on the policy recommendations specifically for the Philippines to address unpaid care and domestic work in particular.

The conceptual framework outlined in figure 1 depicts levers of change that must be present to successfully implement a care-sensitive and gender-differentiated policy agenda. The recent ESCAP report (2021b), *Addressing Unpaid Care Work in ASEAN*, fleshes out these levers of change: care- and gender-disaggregated data, adequate financing, gender-responsive budgeting, suitable legal and regulatory frameworks, inclusion of women’s voices in decision-making, focus on norm change and an overall whole-of-government approach (figure 2). These levers are built on a commitment to core normative principles: that care is recognized as foundational; that the State is the main guarantor of rights; that care is a public good benefiting all in society instead of a cost; that collaborations at the local, national, regional and international levels must be promoted; and that each pillar of the “care diamond” (Razavi, 2007) has a role in redistributing care work. The care diamond is a stylized way of understanding how care work is distributed among the four institutional actors of a society – State, markets, households and community.

### 6.1 Recommendations for levers of change

Using these levers of change as a reference point, the following specific actionable measures are suggested for deliberation by policymakers in the Philippines.

1. **The most pressing need is for sex-, age-, disability- and care-disaggregated data.**

Feminists have called attention to the invisibility of women’s work in national statistics as a political act of knowledge production whereby not only is care work devalued but so too are the persons who perform it.
The Philippines has been successful in implementing a rider survey with the annual Labour Force Survey as well as tapping into alternative sources of data on gendered patterns of time use in household work and paid work, such as the Oxfam WE-Care programme and National Household Care Survey 2021 (see box 5). However, this does not take away from the need for nationally representative survey data to be published to make care visible and valued – either a full-fledged time-use survey or as a rider on existing Labour Force and Household Surveys. The benefits and challenges in designing and conducting time-use surveys have been discussed at length elsewhere (Charmes, 2021; Folbre, 2021). In spite of these challenges and difficulties in comparability, time-use surveys remain the most widely recognized and accepted source of data on the gendered division of labour and for computing the value of care work. A collaboration between the women’s state machinery, the PCW and the Philippine Statistics Authority to work in tandem on institutionalizing time-use surveys is needed.

Another effective source of data can be research studies undertaken by national and international organizations or academic experts independently or in collaboration with government departments. This research can feed into operationalizing the 3R or 5R approaches and can be used by policymakers as evidence towards designing targeted interventions for women. It is also recommended that disability-disaggregated data also be collected because women are disadvantaged both as persons with disabilities as well as their caregivers. Gender- and disability-disaggregated data will enable the targeting of policies, such as health insurance, persons with a disability allowance, health services and care-support programmes.

2 Evaluating the effectiveness of laws is especially significant in the context of the Philippines.

The advantageous legislative climate within the Philippines that supports the recognition and value of women’s household and unpaid care responsibilities is discussed at length in section 3.1. However, what seems to be questionable is the extent of implementation of these policies and the actual benefit Filipino women have derived from them. This requires a set of review mechanisms to be embedded into the legislative framework, where government departments are held accountable for collecting data on implementation. The Women’s Economic Empowerment and Care Ordinances adopted by eight local government units in collaboration with Oxfam (see section 4) signals a positive move in this direction by collecting gender-responsive data in several policy areas (Hall and Aranas, 2020). While the PCW is tasked as the main oversight agency for the monitoring and evaluation of gender and development programmes and laws, it must be supported by all government departments and line agencies in mainstreaming gender into their respective sectors and reporting back on the use or uptake of legal and policy measures. In addition to effective implementation, deterrence and due diligence to address acts of omission by social actors and corporations are also needed to ensure the legal framework serves the needs of the intended beneficiaries. Laws must be strengthened through a network of incentives or complaints and grievance redressal mechanisms that reinforce positive behaviour and make an example out of non-compliance.

Finally, the PCW should also work closely with the Philippine Statistics Authority to review the definitions of work and methods for data collection and statistical assessment. The concept of “work” seems to be commonly associated with economic activity that earns a wage or on a full-time and regular basis. Women’s own understanding and reporting of their work is therefore limited to their reporting themselves as working only if they are in employment. As the previous section highlights, many housewives may not report a diverse range of productive activities they engage in due to these culturally conditioned narrow definitions of work.

3 Policies need financing as much as they need to incorporate a gender and care perspective in their design.

The Philippine Government’s commitment to gender and development is noted in section 3.2 in terms of an increase in associated budgets. However, unpaid care and domestic work requires a cross-sectional approach across the four care policy categories (figure 1). This may require a dedicated budgetary allocation to care within the Gender and Development framework. Implementing gender-responsive budgeting within the Gender and Development codes is therefore needed for utilizing available budgetary outlays to realize policies pertaining to unpaid care. Gender and Development budget plans by all line agencies and ministries can allocate a certain portion to address the unpaid care work agenda within their sphere of operations.

14 The Triple R, or 3R, framework of unpaid care work refers to the need for “recognition”, “reduction” of time and drudgery and “redistribution” of care work from women and households to other actors of the care diamond (Elson, 2008). This framework has been further expanded to include “reward” and “representation” of care workers – be it paid or unpaid – through the ILO Decent Work Agenda and inclusion in decision-making (ILO, 2018) and has been called “the high road to care”. See ESCAP, 2021a for a more detailed discussion.
Second, engaging with the Department of Finance is important for both the PCW as well as development agencies working on the issue of unpaid care to do because it is the agency that decides the revenue allocations for public spending and macroeconomic policies. Therefore, convincing colleagues and policymakers within such strategic agencies is critically important for garnering support for the care agenda.

Lastly, the Mandanas Ruling makes provision to increase funds in the hands of local government units. These funds need to be directed towards expanding social protection programmes with gender-responsive social assistance, inclusion of informal women workers into the systems of social insurance, investments in childcare and other services to care for dependants and the provision of time-, labour- and energy-saving devices and micro-infrastructure like piped water and cooking fuel, especially in rural areas. It is not sufficient to have cleverly designed policies or to simply have access to funds. What is needed is that funds are channelled into the implementation and expansion of targeted policies and services that will have the greatest impact on reducing and redistributing women’s unpaid care work.

4 Increased advocacy on unpaid care and domestic work is needed to shift behavioural norms.

Active efforts to build new norms in which the State and communities value care work and normalize its equitable distribution between men and women need to be undertaken. Challenging entrenched ideas and beliefs around the gendered division of labour is an essential component of any behaviour-change programme. This country study report refers to public campaigns exhorting men to equally shoulder the load of housework and to do it proudly (see box 3). This is necessary because only providing care infrastructure or care services does not automatically reconfigure lopsided gender relations. Providing washing machines, rice cookers or pushcarts may help reduce the time taken in these chores, but it does not dismantle the association of these chores as women’s work. Another example is the overrepresentation of women in paid care jobs because of their association as natural carers. Even though they provide an entry into the labour market, these jobs tend to be seen as low skill and lowly paid, thereby bringing the inequities from within the household into labour markets. This illustrates the need for mindset shifts to bring about a truly equal society. Women themselves often have internalized gendered assumptions and beliefs. For example, women may resist the use of daycare centres for childcare, deeming this the mother’s role. Campaigns targeting both men and women are therefore advisable, along with incorporating this into the educational curriculum at an early age when gender roles are truly socialized. Local government units can be impactful in the designing and running of such behaviour change campaigns on norms to address the unequal distribution of the care economy by customizing the message to target the unique cultural practices within their regions.

5 The design of targeted policies under each of the four care policy categories must incorporate the voices, perspectives and needs of women.

The influence of women's organizing, international activism and international intergovernmental frameworks, along with women leaders in government, national wealth and institutional mechanisms are important factors in promoting women's economic and social rights (Htun and Weldon, 2014). Women are best placed to articulate their needs. Identifying entry points under each of the four care policy categories is crucial. Incorporating women’s voices through quantitative and qualitative research; through partnerships with development agencies, donors and civil society actors; and by taking an intersectional lens across identities of class, ethnicity, location, religion, disability, etc. on which women are located are some of the concrete ways in which the State can develop a wholistic approach to the issue of unpaid care and domestic work.

Policies under each of the four categories are a must for a comprehensive approach to the care issue. For example, ESCAP’s research on COVID-19 policy responses to unpaid care in Asia and the Pacific region found that care-related social protections were the most preferred policy tool. And under these measures, women's maternal roles through support for pregnancy or child grants were emphasized (ESCAP, 2021a). This leaves out a whole range of other care work that women perform, especially domestic and household chores, the care of sick persons, older persons and persons with disabilities who are not independent. A gender-differentiated perspective layered onto a care-responsive perspective together are required to create gender-transformative outcomes (see figure 1).

6 The State needs to adopt a whole-of-government as well as a whole-of-society approach.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has wrought havoc with the lives of people, turning economies upside down and bringing the world to a standstill for long periods of time, the silver lining has been the experience of the necessity of care in every life. The pandemic has provided a unique opportunity
to bring the discourse on care from the margins to the centre of policymakers’ attention – not just as a women’s ministry agenda. It has underscored the importance of working in a holistic and integrated way to address issues surrounding care. Utilizing the current momentum in the care discourse requires continuous advocacy, education and knowledge dissemination, both within government as well as within society at large. Many countries have seen shifts in patterns whereby men have begun to do more work within the home, albeit temporarily under lockdown conditions (İlkkaracan and Memiş, 2021; Deshpande, 2020). This has raised awareness among the general public on the importance of care work – its significance, its time-intensiveness and its need for skilful management.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development, the Department of Labour and Employment, the Department of Education, the Department of Health, the Department of Finance and the Department of Interior and Local Government, to name just a few, must join hands with the PCW to promote regional and national cross-cutting initiatives that address both unpaid care as well as the SDGs. A public–private partnership model or working with civil society organizations locally and development aid agencies internationally can be some of the ways in which the Philippines adopts a consultative and collaborative approach. This can help in research, information-sharing, capacity-building and the concretization of activities and programmes at the ground level.

**Box 7 Project on multistakeholder engagement for valuing women’s unpaid care work**

The **Building Constituency for the Recognition and Valuing of Women’s Work for the Care Economy (BRAVE)** project was a joint undertaking by Oxfam, Pambansang Kongreso ng Kababaihan sa Kanayunan and the Philippine Commission on Women, with support from the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. It aimed to inform the development of a sound and sustainable policy framework for unpaid care work in the Philippines and to strengthen gender emphasis when designing policies associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in the care economy.

The project focused on sharing research findings and data from three recent studies: the 2021 National Household Care Survey, the 2021 Unpaid Care and Domestic Work Policy Scorecard and effectiveness research on Women’s Economic Empowerment and Care (WE-Care) ordinances. The findings were disseminated through a four-part online webinar series attended by government officials and other stakeholders. The webinar participants discussed the need to adopt the following perspectives towards women’s unpaid care and domestic work to bring about a shift in attitudes:

- *Care work makes all work possible.*
- *Care work is teamwork.*
- *Care work is everyone’s responsibility.*
- *Care work makes all other work possible.*
- *Care work involves all genders and all sectors of our society.*

The project was able to (i) conduct capacity-building and training for government agencies and civil society organizations on valuing women’s work and mainstreaming gender sensitivities into national policies, programmes, plans and budgets; (ii) provide best practice evidence on the sharing of care work and how these practices can inform national policy; and (iii) increase awareness and advocacy support for a national policy on unpaid care work through the engagement of policymakers, the media and civil society organizations.

Five national government agencies committed to pursuing a national care policy framework on unpaid care work: the Commission on Human Rights, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Social Welfare and Development, the Department of Tourism and the National Economic Development Authority. The nearly 300 webinar participants gained an increased understanding on the importance of a national policy on unpaid care and domestic work. Additionally, the Philippine Commission on Women has begun integrating unpaid care work into its Gender and Development orientation sessions and training programmes.

6.2 Recommendations for care policies

Enacting a comprehensive law to recognize, value, measure and redistribute the unpaid care work performed by women and girls will serve to make the Philippines avant-garde among nations by leading on the issue of care and working towards building a caring economy and a caring democracy (Women’s Budget Group, 2020; Tronto, 2013). In addition to the previous recommendations for capitalizing the levers of change most effectively, the following are some policy suggestions under each of the four care policy categories.

A Care infrastructure – Ensure that the most deprived communities and far-flung regions, cities and barangays have access to health care centres, roads, electricity, piped water and other social care needs. Cater to conflict-torn areas, such that reproductive health and other essential services remain available in moments of crisis. Second, distribution of time- and energy-saving technologies – through modern equipment, tools and harvesting techniques – in rural communities can help women engaged in farm and household work to free up some of their time. Lastly, investments in research on ways to ease the drudgery and intensity of domestic chores and physical care tasks can be made from a percentage of the Gender and Development budgets of innovation and mechanization institutes.

B Care-related social protections – Expand the targeting of poor women beneficiaries not only for social assistance as mothers but also to support their food provisioning needs, employment needs through public work programmes and old age needs through pensions. The Philippines already has some excellent social assistance programmes in place. However, qualitative studies indicate that the 4Ps, for example, can lead to reduced labour market effort because the conditionalities disincentivize women from seeking paid work out of fear of losing their benefits (Cabegin and Gaddi, 2019). Social protection programmes should aim to remove conditionalities that intensify women’s care tasks or take up more time to the detriment of their participating in the labour market. While most programmes address women as mothers or carers of children, women with disabilities or as carers of persons with disabilities must also be addressed through carer or disability allowances and health insurance coverage.
C Care services – Prioritize the care of children, given the Philippines’ young population by ensuring that day-care laws are implemented at the level of barangays and within government offices. The affordability and accessibility of these day-care centres – their timing, locations and quality of services – must cater to the needs of working women and men, especially solo parents. There is a need to separate the education or learning aspects of early childhood care from the caring aspects. The local government units in association with the PCW must review the implementation of day-care policies, such that it becomes truly an institution of childcare services for children whose parents need to work and not just a learning institution. The early childhood care and education emphasis must not only cater to the preschool population aged 3–5 but also aged 6 months to 3 years, which is when most working mothers tend to give up their job or struggle to combine their paid work with childcare. Once out of the labour force, women find it harder to re-enter. Hence, the availability of care-related services that can address the need for childcare, care for older persons and persons with a disability must be planned for through state and affordable market mechanisms.

D Employment-related care policies – Address the needs of workers with family and care responsibilities instead of assuming only women provide care. This can take the form of both addressing inequitable policies as well as improving the workplace environment for workers with family responsibilities. One suggestion would be to institute equitable maternity and paternity leave policies. In the public sector, strengthen the implementation of Executive Order No. 340 directing the national government agencies and government-owned and controlled corporations to provide day-care services to children (younger than 5 years) of their employees. For the private sector, there is a need to support laws that mandate employers to provide day-care facilities for their employees with children aged 5 years and younger. These must be cared for by qualified, competent personnel with proven experience in childcare. Monitoring and implementation of the Expanded Breastfeeding Promotion Act must be strengthened via establishment of lactation stations in workplaces and granting lactating mothers reasonable nursing breaks to breastfeed or express milk. The importance of flexibility and work-from-home policies has been successfully demonstrated in the pandemic. Therefore, enforcement of the Telecommuting Act must focus on the development of telecommunications infrastructure, particularly in regions outside of Metro Manila, to facilitate access of households to high-speed and quality internet connection as well as increase capacity-building for telecommuting work not only for youth but also for mothers with young children. Finally, it is important that the introduction of these measures not be seen as a cost or burden by employers, and any discrimination of women arising in the workplace on account of their care responsibilities must be actively discouraged.
Section 7
Conclusion

What the pandemic has shown is just how much work caring for others entails. What feminist economists have spent decades researching and establishing has now come to a head. It is a moment of reckoning whereby not only do we recognize and value unpaid care work and the role of women in performing it for societies but also leverage the moment to reorder the ways in which economies and societies are structured. Taking a gender lens to economic activity necessarily requires a care lens once we acknowledge the value and importance of the care work done by women. Care is no longer an externality of economic growth but rather the foundation on which the productive economy is built.

In addition to achieving the goal of gender equality, investing in care policies helps countries to achieve the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs – by freeing up half the population to participate more actively in the economic sphere, thereby reducing poverty, improving health and education outcomes, enabling a voice and decent work conditions in the labour market and ultimately making communities more resilient and inclusive. There are clear economic advantages of investing in the social care sectors as new research has highlighted (De Henau and Himmelweit, 2021; Women’s Budget Group, 2020; Ilkkaracan and Kim, 2019). Countries that heed this call to action will be serving not only women as a constituency but building a more peaceful and prosperous society.

Investing and incorporating a care-sensitive and gender-responsive lens in policymaking requires a change in the legislative, institutional and political economy factors in a country. Care needs to be recognized as foundational – a normative commitment to valuing life above profits. The inequalities that plague societies are built on gendered power relations that have subordinated women and women’s work. It is imperative to correct these imbalances to reap the pay-offs of material wealth and well-being for all.

Governments have a dominant role in bringing about societal change through the nature of policies and services they make available to the population. A long history of research and scholarship has brought care to the centre of development discourse and conceptualized the 3R, 4R and 5R frameworks of recognition of care, reduction in time and drudgery, redistribution of care work, reward and representation of carers. Now we need to go beyond these conceptual frameworks by taking specific policy actions, such as what this case study report outlines. A national law recognizing the value and importance of care work could be a critical first step, followed by concrete actions supporting its implementation.

Development partners such as United Nations agencies, the Canadian International Development Agency, Oxfam and others have been working hard with the PCW and the Government of the Philippines to support the achievement of SDG 5 (and target 54) that recognizes the value of women’s unpaid care work as one of the legs on which gender equality is built. Care of humans and care of the planet are two crucial inputs supporting a productive economy. Sustainable recovery and building better forward needs a gender-inclusive and greener world, which will be possible only when adequate attention to care is given.
References


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