Enhancing the labour participation of women: Work-family balance and unpaid work

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Global Female Labor Force:

- 1.3 billion, approximately 39.9 per cent of the total labor force of 3.3 billion (ILO, 2012)

- Ranges from 16 per cent in Jordan to 90 per cent in Tanzania
Gender, Work-Family Issues

- **Current Situation:**
  - US. 57.7% women in paid labor force including 71.3% of women with young children
  - OECD (2012) countries about 65%
  - In developing world range from 21 percent in the Middle East and North Africa to 71 percent in East Asia and the Pacific

Masks variation between countries and in countries
Labor Force Disparities

- From global perspective, improvements in girl’s education have not translated into gains in economic participation or empowerment;

- Huge disparities in wage gaps, female segregation in the informal labor force; women relegated to specific employment sectors;
Gender, Work-Family Issues

- **Western assumption:** Incorporation into labor force increases women’s status

- **Research findings:**
  - Cannot universalize
  - Middle class women in industrialized world benefit from ideologies that emphasize female empowerment through wage work
  - Women in developing world not benefiting in same manner
  - Women accept lower wages/unstable work in order to balance work/family
  - Under certain conditions little power over earnings
  - Key responsibility for house and family - even when primary breadwinner
  - Makes them vulnerable to domestic violence under certain conditions
Among poor in industrialized and developing world:

- Women and children work outside the home as a strategy for survival and not as path for individual advancement.

- Results in greater family cohesion than fragmentation.
  - That may ensure greater individual well-being.

- Not understood from Western perspective.
Problematic Research

- Western discussions about the developing world tend to be conceptualize a homogenous unit.

- Based on fundamental assumption that women and men, in developing countries, experience their society based on cultural ideals instead of differences of social class, socio-historical moment, ethnicity and other variables.

- Affects research on work-family issues / caretaking / policy formation.
Other Issues Influencing Employment and Decent Work for All: Globalization

- Increase in:
  - Nonstandard work schedules
  - Job insecurity
  - Wide differences in earnings in same societies

- High earning families faced with intense work demand

- Low earning families:
  - Little if any control over the hours they work
  - Do not earn enough money to provide for their basic needs or purchase care for their families
  - Precarious jobs
Consequences of Women’s Incorporation into Labor Force

- Controversies around division of labor in domestic realm - global issue

- Extreme differences within same society and between West and developing countries

- Issue of care work neglected
Feminization of Global Labor Force

- Care work includes: children AND sick, elderly and disabled
- Globalization has intensified the market for household and care work to be serviced out
- One response has been increased migration of women from developing world to industrialized world
- Re-definition of manhood and male roles as men lose jobs and/or earn less;
  - Breadwinner role not universally masculine anymore
  - Forced to participate in domestic realm
  - Resistance to this takes many forms
Effects of Unpaid Labor

- Access to full and decent employment is restricted as women continue to be in low paid insecure jobs and carry a disproportionate burden of unpaid caring labor

- Perpetuates male as breadwinner myth
Unpaid Care Work

- Survey data indicates that in all countries:
  - Women spend at least twice as much time as men on domestic work, and when all work (paid and unpaid) is taken into account, women work longer hours than men do (United Nations, (2010). The World’s Women 2010: Trends and Statistics)

- In industrialized world men are taking on increased child care and elder care
  - Women spend 15 – 40 hour on child care
  - Men spend 10 – 30 hours on child care
  - Finland, Denmark and Sweden closest to parity
Globalization and the Crisis in Care

- Developing world:
  - Increasingly young people follow jobs
  - Leave elderly without social support network
    - Example: China – one child policy detrimental to care issues
  - Older, unemployed women or women with extensive caretaking responsibilities increasingly vulnerable
  - ‘Invisibility’ of the elderly and their ascription to the ‘family’ realm has kept them out of the public arena with respect to policies, programming and financial support
Current Situation

- Global focus on families with young children
- Slow shift in coping with aging societies
  - Affects families savings, employment, productivity
  - Many elders living alone
  - Raising grandkids – U.S. / Sub-Saharan Africa
Women and the Life Cycle: Specific Issues

- Women face life cycle consequences that are different from men

- In U.S. only 21 percent of women want to work full time

- Globally - women drop in and out of the work force:
  - Affects retirement
  - Affects promotions
  - Affects ability to develop long term skills
  - Affects career planning

- In the industrialized world, women remain disproportionately in the” helping” / “caring” professions
  - Lower salaries
  - Lower status
• Families are still the primary caregivers for the elderly.
  • They provide more care to more parents over much longer periods than their parents did.

• The caregiver is usually the female adult child who lives closest or has the fewest other responsibilities.

• A typical caregiver is female, middle-aged or older, married, employed, and provides care an average of 20 hours/week.

• Family Caregivers experience both costs and benefits.
  • Satisfaction — Family relationships can be renewed or strengthened. Caregiving is a “labor of love” and can enhance a sense of self-worth.
  • Strains — Older people often need support when their children’s lives are demanding. Families are often unprepared for caregiving:
    • Routines are disrupted, and conflict may increase.
Issue of Domestic and Care Work (ie. Unpaid Work) Marginalized

- Care work rarely conceptualized as work
- Needs to be of concern to local, national, and international policymakers
- Recent estimate that the replacement value of care provided by family caretakers in U.S. for a year, approx. $306 billion in contrast to formal home care at $43 billion
- Increasingly associated with migration from developing countries to industrialized countries
Policy Recommendations

- Expansion of knowledge base about policies on work and families that includes research on non-Western societies
  - Empirical data should include quantitative and qualitative evidence
  - Cross-cultural perceptions of best practices
  - Life cycle / life course research
  - Multi-level research
- Forums that bring together stakeholders
- Creative mechanisms of disseminating current knowledge
Policy Recommendations

- Increased collaboration / discourse between Employers, Researchers, Governments, Transnational Bodies & NGO’s

- Introduce examples of policies / initiatives from different parts of the world

  - For instance, in some Scandinavian countries, Singapore, care labor at home is now compensated
  - Take into account type of industry / cultural differences
  - Provide empirical data how productivity has increased
  - Increase family life education programs
    - Caregiver stress
    - Sandwich generation
Specific Gender Policy Recommendations:

- Expansion of parental / FAMILY leave policies
- Quantify and reduce care work
- Develop educational systems and materials that challenge gender stereotypes
- Challenge notion of women’s work based on stereotypes
- Raise the quality of work in all sectors

(ILO 2010)
OECD (2013) reports that:

- Levels of maternal employment in Europe are positively related to state policies that subsidize care provision.
- Leads to positive birth rates.
Thank You 😊