Program
“Care and Sustainable Economy in the Post 2015 Development Agenda”

A Side-Event at the Fifty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women

Date: Monday 17th March, 2014
Time: 3:00pm - 4:15pm
Place: UN building, Conference room C (CB)

Chairperson
Nicole Bidegain Ponte, Executive Committee Member, DAWN

Welcome and Opening Remarks
Nicole Bidegain Ponte, Executive Committee Member, DAWN
Michèle Auga, Executive Director at Friedrich Ebert Foundation, New York

Speakers:
Magda Lanuza, DAWN Associate, Nicaragua
Corina Rodriguez, CIEPP Researcher and DAWN Associate, Argentina
Tahere Siisiialafia, Executive Member, Pacific Youth Council, Samoa
Liu Bohong, Professor, China Women’s University, China

Respondents:
Beatriz Ramirez, National Director, Women's Institute of Uruguay Social Development Ministry
Ute Möhring, Deputy Head of Division, Human Rights and Gender Equality, German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)

Comments from the floor:
Member states, UN agencies, civil society organizations, media

Chair: Closing remarks

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**Concept Note**

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- **What does care work to do with the sustainable development?**
- **How MDGs failed to address the unequal distribution of unpaid domestic and care work between men and women impeded the realization of the goal on gender equality?**
- **How can this issue be readdressed in the Post 2015 Development Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals?**

Care work refers to the broad range of activities necessary for every day reproduction of human life, the environment and the economic system. It includes, for example, collecting water and fuel for domestic consumption, cooking, cleaning the house, keeping safe living environments, and also the direct work of caring for people: children, elderly, persons with disabilities, and adults of all ages. Without everyday care work, life could not be sustained and reproduced. Without everyday care work, labour force could not be available to work and to produce economic value, essential for development. Not only does this work sustain the labor force, but it also absorbs the ‘invisible’ costs of poor infrastructure and service provision when governments do not provide them, which is further exacerbated by effects of climate change, ecological damage and extreme weather conditions.

All around the world, care responsibilities are unequally taken on by households, the State and the private sector. They are also unequally distributed between women and men. Because accessible public care services are scarce, and private care services unaffordable, most of care work is taken on by households. Due to the persistence of gender stereotypes and the paradigm of men providers-women caregivers, most of unpaid care and domestic work is assumed by women and girls.

The unequal distribution of unpaid care work is directly connected to the unequal distribution of paid work and economic opportunities. In brief, the gender division of labour (which includes paid and unpaid work), constitutes a main source of economic gender inequality. This explains not only women’s lower participation in the labor market, but also their larger presence in informal, low-waged and precarious employment. Later, this constitutes an obstacle to advance in poverty eradication. It also explains why older women, who have dedicated their entire lives to care for other, have no protection and live their last years with unmet basic needs.

The unfair burden of care responsibilities also reinforces social inequities, derived from an economic model that systematically recreates economic concentration and social exclusion. Women living in poverty faced an even heavier burden of unpaid care work, due to poor public services and infrastructure, and the inability of purchasing care services in the market. People living with HIV faced specific care needs and have, in some regions, become careers themselves in the context of inaccessible and inadequate health systems. Care for the elderly is crucial in the context of aging societies.

Migrant women are also key actors in global care chains, taking care of other children, while leaving their own behind. This paid care work is closely knitted with labor supply lines across boundaries where women migrants are providing care services often for low pay and under questionable labor conditions. These global care chains imply a "care drain" from developing to developed countries.
The position of women and men regarding paid and unpaid work, and consequently regarding access to assets, resources and opportunities, explains why and how macroeconomic policies, international trade and financial liberalization impacts them differently as members of the workforce, as consumers and producers, and as responsible for the activities of the "care economy" within and outside households.

20 years ago, Beijing Platform For Action recognized the need to measure the unpaid care and domestic work in quantitative terms through national accounts in order to recognize the economic contribution of women and make visible the unequal distribution of remunerated and unremunerated work between women and men (para 206 (f) (iii)). Despite advances in the development of time use surveys and satellite accounts within national accounts systems, in some countries, still little have been made in terms concrete recognition and redistribution of unpaid care work.

Moreover, in 2000 the promotion of the Millennium Development Goals had consequences for the implementation of the hard-won women’s rights commitments, including the agenda on social redistribution of care. MDGs’ prioritization hindered the implementation of the comprehensive human and women’s rights agreements, orienting governments and cooperation priorities to a set of reductive targets and vertically driven programs (DAWN, 2012).

Therefore, the promotion of an objective-based global framework under the Post 2015 Development debates implies the same risk of reducing development agendas to a list of goals, targets and indicators that can perpetuate "development silos". The competition among thematic agendas can leave care again out of the game.

Moreover, the MDGs referred to a global partnership for development (a clear reference to a partnership between developed and developing countries) while in the current debates about the Post-2015 Development Agenda, partnerships among different "stakeholders" includes those between governments and the private sector. In a context of increasing influence of corporations, the promotion of public-private partnerships as a mean of implementation can erode government’s role and capacity to protect, respect and fulfill human rights for all.

Instead, the Post-2015 development agenda can provide strong guidance to states to reorient economic and social policies towards redistribution, sustainability and justice. Some experiences at national level prove that it is possible to foster structural changes in the social organization of care, with the commitment of the State and the implementation of concrete public policies. These experiences should feed the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) debate.

For example, parental leave benefits and public care services in some European countries allowed to increase significantly women’s labour participation, as well as to redistribute care responsibilities between women and men within households. Not only economically advanced countries can afford this type of public interventions. During last years, some Latin American countries have also started not only to include care issues in public policy agenda, but also to recognize the right to care and the need to value unpaid care work, in national legal frameworks (for example in Ecuador, Peru, Colombia). Others have advanced in the discussion at the policy level, and even in the slowly implementation of concrete policies, in the context of building national care systems (for example, in Costa Rica and Uruguay). The alliances between civil society and political authorities have proved to be key, in order to foster these processes.

Inequalities deeply rooted in current pattern of growth can’t be overcome without the recognition and social redistribution of unpaid care work. In order to achieve meaningful and transformative equality, SDGs should board this issue. Specific targets on co-responsibility of care between the State, the private sector and diverse
forms of families should be considered. Besides, targets on reducing the gap on time use between men and women should be taken into account.

The role of the State and public policies are key to transform the current unequal share of care responsibilities, by:

- Developing statistics that measure care work (time use surveys) in order to recognize, count and value it, as well in order to inform policy-making.
- Investing in social services that would expand access to quality housing, water, transport and energy.
- Providing universal access to care services, implementing public care services that are available at the community level emphasizing rural communities as well as urban communities in poverty.
- Promoting the regulation of care services to ensure quality and decent working conditions and income for paid care providers; taking specific measures to make visible and improve the situation of domestic workers, including migrants.
- Fostering work-life balance policies, including maternity, paternity and parental leave benefits, regulation of the length and shape of paid work hours, adapting care services to diverse needs of different types of families.
- Promoting cultural transformation of gender stereotypes, making it possible for women and men to equally share the whole burden of productive and reproductive work.

Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung New York Office and the United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (UN-NGLS) are organizing an event on Monday 17th March from 3.00 to 4.15 pm at the UN building, Conference room C (CB), with the co-sponsorship by the Government of Uruguay and the Government of Germany.

This panel will bring the feminist advocates from the South to discuss the key priorities and strategies to integrate the care work into the transformative sustainable development agenda and macro-economic policies. Governments from Uruguay and Germany will give valuable insights in terms public policies on redistribution of care work as well their perspectives around the potential role of the recognition and redistribution of care work in shaping the Post 2015 Development Agenda. Interventions from governments will be followed by a moderated discussion with all participants.