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# Business Briefing on Unpaid Care and Domestic Work

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Why unpaid care  
by women and girls  
matters to business,  
and how companies  
can address it



## Contents

Forewords	3
<b>Executive summary</b> Tackling unpaid care and domestic work Business benefits and society gains	4
<b>Section 1</b> Understanding unpaid care and domestic work and why it matters	6
<b>Section 2</b> Business benefits for companies of addressing unpaid care and domestic work	9
<b>Section 3</b> What businesses can do to address unpaid care and domestic work	12
References	22

### Unpaid

not paid, voluntary, *'gratis'*

### Care

to give care, to look after another  
person who is sick or unable  
to care for themselves; to feel  
interest or concern

### and

### Domestic

place of home, in the household

### Work

to perform work or fulfil duties or  
chores; effort expended in a task

This is a joint Oxfam and Unilever business briefing. Oxfam, Unilever and Unilever's laundry brand, Surf, are working together to address unpaid care work, and so supporting women to make choices that will help them create a brighter future for themselves and their families. The three-year WE-Care partnership is the first of its kind, aiming to recognise, reduce and redistribute the amount of time spent by women and girls on unpaid care work in the Philippines and Zimbabwe.



# Forewords

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Women around the world take great pride and satisfaction in looking after children, the elderly and sick members of their family, as well as their homes – what specialists call ‘unpaid care and domestic work’. And well they should! Family and community life, our societies and our economies depend upon this work.

And yet in countries rich and poor, women – and often girls – are unfairly made to shoulder an unequal and excessive amount of unpaid care. The time and energy required for care limits women’s opportunities to earn an income, develop personally and thrive professionally. Excessive unpaid care work is stubbornly holding back women’s and girls’ empowerment.

Oxfam is proud to have worked with Unilever, local women’s rights organisations and partners across Africa, Asia and Latin America to free up women’s time – from building water sources closer to homes to challenging the idea that unpaid care is ‘women’s work’. I seize every chance to have influence on these issues in decision-making spaces, from chiefs in the communities where Oxfam works to leaders at Davos to the UN and World Bank. I see momentum for change.

It’s clearer than ever that businesses have a responsibility – and are ready – to *Commit, Act* and *Advocate* on

unpaid care. Global businesses, across sectors, can strengthen their supply chain, labour and gender policies to include explicit commitments to address unpaid care. They can use the unparalleled power of their brands and advertising to promote new norms where men and boys do their equal share of unpaid care. They can support their suppliers to adopt family-friendly employment policies and influence governments to make reducing women’s unpaid care work a key policy objective.

That’s why I’m excited to share this Business Briefing. It shows clearly what businesses can do to address this critical issue – to enable women to thrive.

**Winnie Byanyima**  
Executive Director  
Oxfam International



Gender equality is a matter of human rights. Many organisations are making commitments to policies and practices that empower women and drive progress toward this goal. However, there is more to be done.

In particular, we need to move towards systematically tackling one of the most binding constraints

women face – the disproportionate responsibility for family and household care work. This is an unfair burden and it is not just a family matter; the impact of unpaid care on women and girls is a business issue too. As the business case for tackling unpaid care becomes more compelling (or impossible to ignore), we see how companies that have taken steps to tackle it are benefitting from their actions.

At Unilever, women represent 70% of our consumers and 49% of our managerial workforce. We want our own workforce to be free of limiting norms and stereotypes in the workplace and we therefore implement progressive policies to enable equal economic participation. We are also championing equality through our brands like Dove Men+Care, advocating for better paternity leave policies. In wider society, we are helping to eliminate harmful gender stereotypes from advertising through the Unstereotype Alliance.

Systemic change is not possible if we are doing this alone. Collaboration across sectors and industries is key and our partnership with Oxfam to address unpaid care work is an example of just that. We are already seeing signs of success from the programme in the Philippines and Zimbabwe. Now it is time to build on this and mobilise others. I urge my fellow business leaders to *Commit, to Act, to Advocate* on unpaid care and domestic work. Together, our actions can have a bigger impact in addressing the inequities of unpaid care work, enabling us to accelerate gender equality and the overall growth of the economy.

**Leena Nair**  
Chief HR Officer  
Unilever

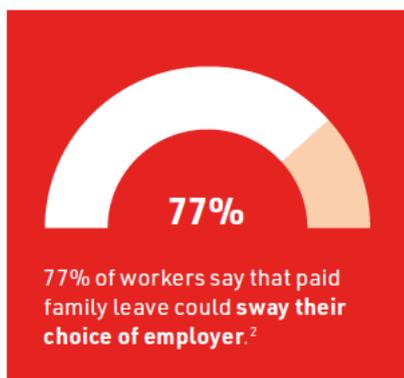
# Tackling unpaid care and domestic work

## Business benefits and society gains

There is growing evidence that business leaders and managers understand that the unequal and heavy share of unpaid care and domestic work done by women and girls is an issue which matters for the effective (ongoing) operations of their firms.

Some companies have already taken practical steps to address the issue by supporting employees along their value chain, for example with workplace policies that enable care responsibilities to be met, and by innovating with products and services that meet evolving consumer family and household care needs, thereby simultaneously creating business value.

At a 'big picture' macro, society level, experts have determined that current patterns of unequal unpaid care work are holding women back from full participation in the labour force, and so acting as a significant barrier to unlocking the economic boost that would come from achieving gender equality – estimated to be as much as 26% of global GDP/US\$28 trillion.<sup>1</sup>



Recognising, reducing and redistributing unpaid care work by women and girls can benefit business at the individual firm level too. Analysis of what business is doing and why (examples of which are shared in this paper) suggests there are a number of areas where firms can create business value:



### Talent acquisition and retention

Businesses with policies like paid parental or family leave and flexible work arrangements enable employees to manage unpaid family and household care responsibilities, and find it easier to attract and retain workers.



### Productivity and employee engagement

Employers that take a holistic view of workers' lives, including their caregiving and household responsibilities, and that help address aspects that cause employee distraction, fatigue and absenteeism, can improve workforce performance and engagement.



### Supply chain resilience and diversity

Businesses that encourage employers in their supply chain to address unpaid care work issues can help build stable and diverse sources of supply, contributing to their ability to mitigate risk and serve customer needs.



### Revenue and business growth

Developing products and services that address the causes and consequences of unequal unpaid care work – for example, time- and labour-saving devices – can contribute to business growth.

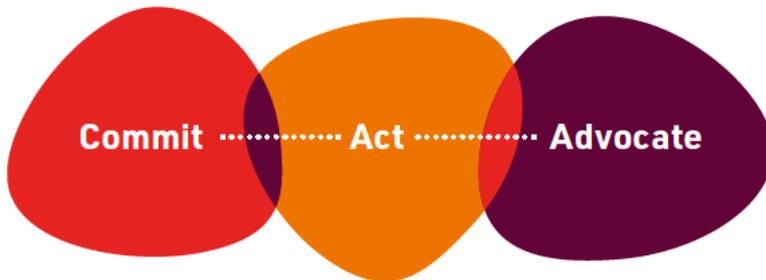


### Customer acquisition and loyalty

Businesses that sell consumer goods and services can differentiate their brands, win new customers and cement customer loyalty by challenging the dynamics that underpin unequal unpaid care work, such as gender stereotypes in advertising.

Oxfam and Unilever have joined forces to share complementary learning and insights gleaned from working on unpaid care and domestic work with communities and consumers around the world, and with businesses and brands to share emerging good practice and evidence.

Together Oxfam and Unilever are urging businesses to take unpaid care work seriously as a business issue and take three simple steps:



## Commit

Strengthen existing corporate commitments to gender equality, women’s empowerment and the Sustainable Development Goals with an explicit ambition to help reduce and redistribute the responsibility for unpaid care work.

A clear and specific commitment to address unpaid care work as it affects women and men throughout the value chain – ideally with senior executive buy-in – helps create legitimacy and direction for action in relevant parts of the business, and sends an important signal of intent both internally and externally.

## Act

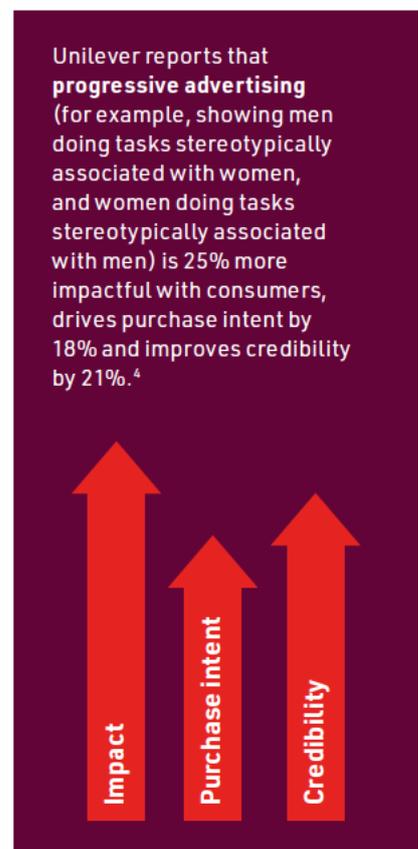
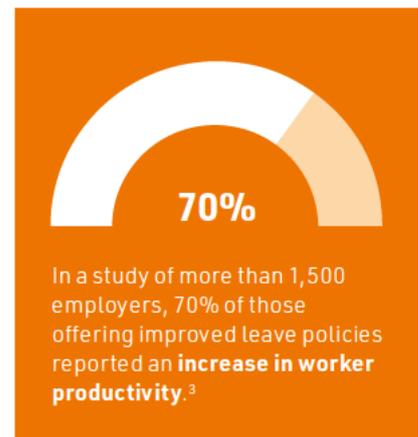
Target action on unpaid care and domestic work where it can have the biggest impact for women and girls, and for the business. For example, implement family-friendly employment practices, ensure advertising portrays women progressively and, where appropriate, invest in the design, production and distribution of low-energy time- and labour-saving products which are affordable and accessible.

Prioritising action based on potential impact makes the most effective use of corporate resources and sets the stage for demonstration effects both within the company and in the business community at large.

## Advocate

Collaborate with other companies, industry associations, government and civil society to marshal evidence and resources for policy-level change.

While individual companies can have meaningful impacts on their own, there are beneficial shifts to be made in public policies that govern worker rights and conditions across industries, that shape the provision of childcare and elder care facilities, or that influence investment decisions in the provision of basic services like water, sanitation and energy. Advocating for public policy change and targeted public investment requires a multi-stakeholder approach to better understand and articulate the case from community and industry points of view.



# Understanding unpaid care and domestic work and why it matters

## A critical contribution to the economy and to functioning societies

Unpaid care and domestic work keeps families, communities and businesses running. It is a positive and valuable contribution to our economies and the functioning of our societies.

From birth to adulthood, people need care that enables them to grow, learn and function, and then to contribute to society in their own ways –

as workers, thinkers, artists, entrepreneurs, political leaders and more. This kind of care comes in many forms, from raising children to caring for disabled and elderly family members to keeping homes clean and safe and putting meals on the table. Individuals, societies and economies simply cannot operate or thrive without this type of care and support.

Figure 1: What is included in unpaid care and domestic work?



## A disproportionate workload holding back women and girls' empowerment



Photo: Aurelie Marrier d Unienville/Oxfam

The responsibility for doing unpaid care work falls disproportionately on women and girls – and this is a problem. Globally, women on average do more than three times the unpaid care work done by men,<sup>5</sup> rising to more than five times in poor rural areas.<sup>6</sup> There is not a single country

where men and women do equal amounts of unpaid care work, and in some regions women do as much as 80–90%.<sup>7</sup> This unequal division of labour, combined in some countries with a lack of basic infrastructure (like electricity and water), a lack of time-saving

equipment (like washing machines) and a lack of affordable alternative care services (like childcare), creates a significant unpaid care workload for women. On average, women spend 4.5 hours a day on family and household care,<sup>8</sup> and this is likely to increase further as women are expected to do the lion's share of care for an ageing global population.

Studies from the United Nations,<sup>9</sup> Oxfam<sup>10</sup> and others point to the challenges that significant unpaid care workloads create for women. These include chronic time deficits that exacerbate women's time poverty, in turn limiting their ability to participate in economic, political and social activities including opportunities for education, employment, entrepreneurship and participation in political and social life. In some places, unpaid care keeps girls out of school. It prevents women and girls from enjoying their rights on an equal basis with men, reduces their earning power and influence in family decision-making, and leaves them overly dependent on the men in their families.

## A missed opportunity for men and boys

When men don't shoulder their fair share of unpaid care work, they can miss out on positive and life-affirming experiences, such as the lifelong bonds that can come from spending time with children as they grow. Taking on unpaid care work can contribute to a man's sense of self-worth and work-life balance, and to more fulfilling relationships with a partner and other family members. However, it can be difficult for men who wish to play more active caregiving roles to depart from outdated social norms that label this 'women's work'.

Unequal responsibility for unpaid care work is both a missed opportunity for men and boys and a major obstacle on the path to achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls. Easing the load can help expand women's choices, improve their quality of life and that of their families, and unlock the benefits of gender equality as a driver of economic growth and prosperity.



Photo: iStock.com/Wavebreakmedia



Photo: Aurelie Marrier d Unienville/Oxfam

### Box 1. Easing the load and sharing responsibility for unpaid care and domestic work<sup>11</sup>

Experts focused on the topic of unpaid care and domestic work have created a simple framework that summarises key steps that need to be taken by governments, civil society organisations and businesses to redress the balance and relieve women's heavy share of unpaid care work, freeing up their time for other pursuits.

The 4R framework is based on the work of Diane Elson as presented in D. Elson (2008) 'The Three R's of Unpaid Work: Recognition, Reduction and Redistribution'. The concept of the 4th R was developed by Oxfam and ActionAid.

#### The 4R framework

- 1. Recognise** that unpaid care work is mainly done by women, acknowledge it as work – a type of production that creates real value – and recognise it as such in relevant policies.
- 2. Reduce** the total number of hours that need to be spent on unpaid care tasks by improving access to affordable time-saving devices and care-supporting infrastructure such as water, electricity and public transport.
- 3. Redistribute** unpaid care work within the household so that the total amount of unpaid care work is more fairly shared among family members, and shift some of the cost, responsibility and opportunity associated with unpaid care work to the state and the private sector (for example, through state and/or employer-sponsored childcare services and paid parental leave).
- 4. Represent** caregivers effectively in design and decision-making so they can voice their concerns and shape policies, budgets and plans that reflect their needs and interests.

# Business benefits for companies of addressing unpaid care and domestic work

Unequal unpaid care and domestic work is a barrier to gender equality, which is recognised as both a human right and a critical driver of economic growth and business success. As much as 26% of global GDP – US\$28 trillion – could be added by 2025 if women played identical roles to men in the labour force.<sup>12</sup> And this would benefit individual firms, too. One study found that 34% of companies with programmes targeting women reported an increase in profits.<sup>13</sup>

The study of how unpaid care work impacts business is young, but already it is clear there are business benefits to be gained.

In this section, we describe five distinct benefits to business from addressing unpaid care:

1. Talent acquisition and retention;
2. Productivity and employee engagement;
3. Supply chain resilience and diversity;
4. Revenue and business growth; and
5. Customer acquisition and loyalty.

Some companies have recognised an additional reputational benefit of publicly committing to the Sustainable Development Goals (of which SDG 5.4 addresses unpaid care and domestic work).

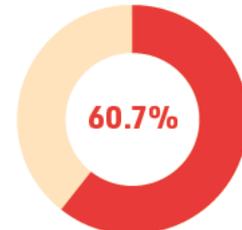


## 1. Talent acquisition and retention

Businesses with policies that support unpaid family and household care, like paid parental leave and flexible work arrangements, find it easier to attract and retain workers. These policies help bring women into the workforce and keep them there longer, ensuring that businesses do not miss out on the employment potential, talent and skills of half the population. Flexible workplace policies can reduce employee turnover, which translates into cost savings in hiring and retraining workers. A review of 30 case studies in research papers on the costs of employee turnover found that it cost businesses about one-fifth of a worker's salary to replace that worker.<sup>14</sup>

Globally, 60.7% of employed adults have **family responsibilities** or live with people who depend on their care.<sup>15</sup>

In Africa, 85% of employed women say they have care responsibilities.<sup>16</sup>



77% of workers say that paid family leave could **sway their choice of employer**.<sup>17</sup>

Following management training and the introduction of more flexible working practices, the number of **women returning to employment** at the Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ Ltd after maternity leave increased more than fourfold.<sup>18</sup>

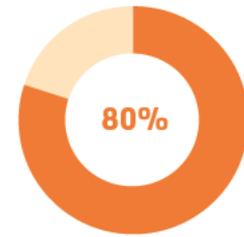




## 2. Productivity and employee engagement

Employers that take a holistic view of workers' lives, including their caregiving and household responsibilities, and that help address aspects that cause employee distraction, fatigue and absenteeism, can improve workforce performance and engagement.

80% of employees with care responsibilities report that they are **less productive** as a result, and 33% report that caregiving prevents them from doing their best work at all times.<sup>19</sup>



In a study of more than 1,500 employers, 70% of those offering improved leave policies reported an **increase in worker productivity**.<sup>20</sup>



**If the child is happy, the mum is happy and this makes her a better worker."**

Dirk Lategan, General Farm Manager at River Fresh Farm, Afrifresh, South Africa<sup>21</sup>



## 3. Supply chain resilience and diversity

Businesses that encourage employers in their supply chain to address unpaid care work issues can help build stable and diverse sources of supply, contributing to their ability to mitigate risk and serve customer needs. This is because just as unpaid care work impacts a business's own employees, it can affect the workforces of its suppliers – by reducing productivity and quality, increasing the cost of hiring and training new workers, contributing to labour shortages and limiting workforce diversity.

Within one year of opening childcare facilities at Red Lands Roses, a floriculture business in Kenya that serves clients in Japan and China, **unplanned leave declined** by 25% and productivity improved.<sup>22</sup>



Before

After

Martur, a car component manufacturer in Turkey, **reduced staff turnover** by 15% by offering childcare-related benefits.<sup>23</sup>



**The biggest lesson for us? We could have saved ourselves a lot of time and money if we had thought of childcare right from the start when we built the plant. Not doing so cost us four years of high employee turnover and lower productivity."**

Zeyit Damar, Human Resources Manager, Martur Kütahya plant, Turkey<sup>24</sup>



## 4. Revenue and business growth

Businesses have an opportunity to increase their revenues and differentiate their brands by developing new products and services that address the causes and consequences of unequal unpaid care work. Innovation in time- and labour-saving devices and products, for example, can reduce the amount of time and effort caregivers spend on household tasks such as cleaning, washing and cooking.

Unilever's Comfort One Rinse fabric conditioner in Vietnam, which halves the amount of water needed per wash – and therefore the time and effort required to collect it – saw an **increase in sales** of 9.7% in 2017 following an advertising campaign.<sup>25</sup>

**↑ 9.7%**



**4,000**

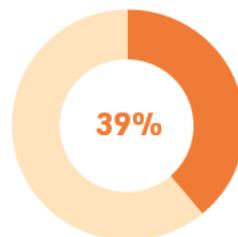
In India, HDFC Standard Life's Smart Women insurance product helps female policy owners cope with disruptions in income that women commonly experience as a result of care responsibilities – for example, following the birth of a child. The product **sold 4,000 policies** in its first month and was later named 'Product of the Year' in Nielsen's consumer survey.<sup>26</sup>



## 5. Customer acquisition and loyalty

Businesses that sell consumer goods and services can differentiate their brands, win new customers and cement customer loyalty by challenging the dynamics that underpin unequal unpaid care work, such as gender stereotypes in advertising. Research shows that some advertisers are behind the times in their portrayal of gender roles at home, and that more progressive representation of women and girls, men and boys in marketing and advertising can have a positive impact.

39% of consumers said they believe that advertising **does not accurately represent** all genders...



30% felt that brands **misrepresent them** and their gender.<sup>27</sup>

Unilever reports that **progressive advertising** (for example, showing men doing tasks stereotypically associated with women, and women doing tasks stereotypically associated with men) is 25% more impactful with consumers, drives purchase intent by 18% and improves credibility by 21%.<sup>28</sup>



# What businesses can do to address unpaid care and domestic work

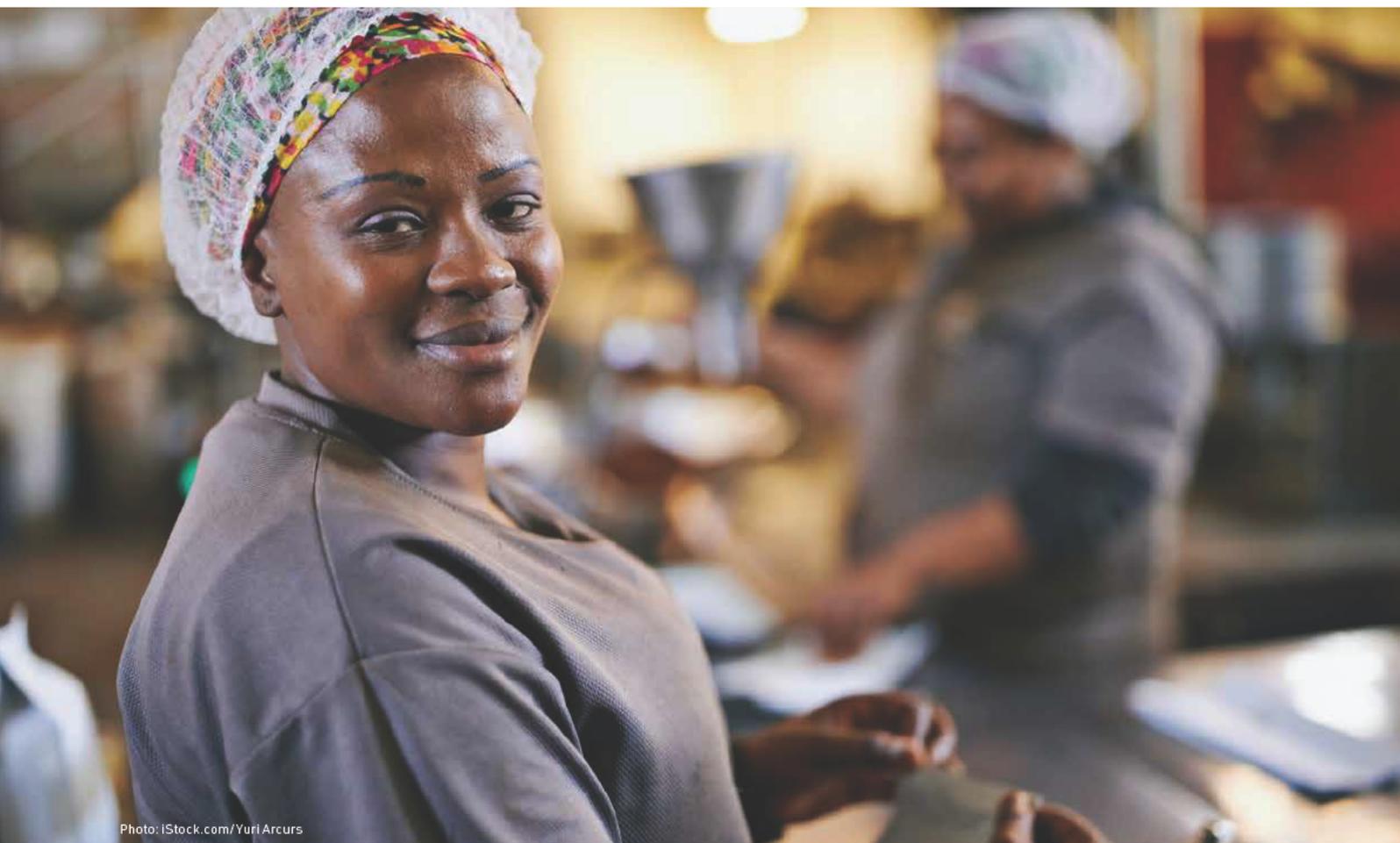
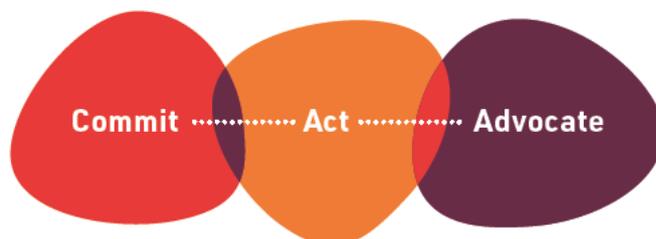


Photo: iStock.com/Yuri Arcurs

The current pattern of unpaid care and domestic work, where it falls disproportionately on women and girls, is a source of business cost and risk – affecting employee turnover, productivity, quality and security of supply. If addressed thoughtfully and proactively, it can be transformed into a source of business benefits and competitive advantage – with positive impacts on employee recruitment, retention and engagement, brand differentiation, consumer loyalty and sales.

Business action is essential to reducing and redistributing unpaid care work, and there are many ways for companies to act within their own businesses as well as to influence others. Now is the time for senior executives to take a closer look at the issue and how it affects their companies, make their plans and begin to act.

Building on the learning from a multi-year partnership on the ground in Asia and Africa and observations from research into corporate action, Oxfam and Unilever suggest that there are three core elements to an effective business approach:



## Commit

- 1. Strengthen your existing corporate commitments to gender equality, women's empowerment and the Sustainable Development Goals with an explicit ambition to help reduce and redistribute the responsibility for unpaid care work.**

A clear and specific commitment to address unpaid care work as it affects women and men throughout the value chain – ideally with senior executive buy-in – helps create legitimacy and direction for action in relevant parts of the business, and sends an important signal of intent both internally and externally.

“Unpaid care work continues to be an issue impacting many people in both our business and the communities where we operate, disproportionately impacting women. A multifaceted approach which focuses on both policies, programmes and cultural change is required to address this, and we're committed to playing our part.”

Kate Gibson, Director, Diageo in Society<sup>29</sup>

## Act

- 2. Target action on unpaid care and domestic work where it can have the biggest impact for women and girls, and for your business.**

Prioritising action based on potential impact makes the most effective use of corporate resources and sets the stage for demonstration effects both within the company and in the business community at large. Which are the highest-impact opportunities will depend on the size and gender mix of the employee base, for example, and whether products and marketing are connected to unpaid care work.

“In the absence of hard data, few employers understand just how profound an effect caregiving has on the organization's costs and performance in tangible and intangible ways.”

From 'The Caring Company', Harvard Business School<sup>30</sup>

## Advocate

- 3. Collaborate with other companies, industry associations, government and civil society to marshal evidence and resources for policy-level change.**

While individual companies can have meaningful impacts on their own, there may be beneficial shifts to be made in public policies that govern worker rights and conditions across industries, that shape the provision of childcare and elder care facilities, or that influence investment decisions in the provision of basic services like water, sanitation and energy. Advocating for public policy change and targeted public investment requires a multi-stakeholder approach to better understand and articulate the case from community and industry points of view.

“Women's economic empowerment is about creating gender equality and removing barriers to entry into the workforce for women. (...) Empowerment comes from creating onramps for women to be able to work if they want to. It's what happens when we address barriers like unpaid care work, or a lack of access to property and financial assets, which are just some of the reasons why women's labour participation is lower.”

Tina Fordham, Chief Global Political Analyst, Citi<sup>31</sup>

## Examples of business action

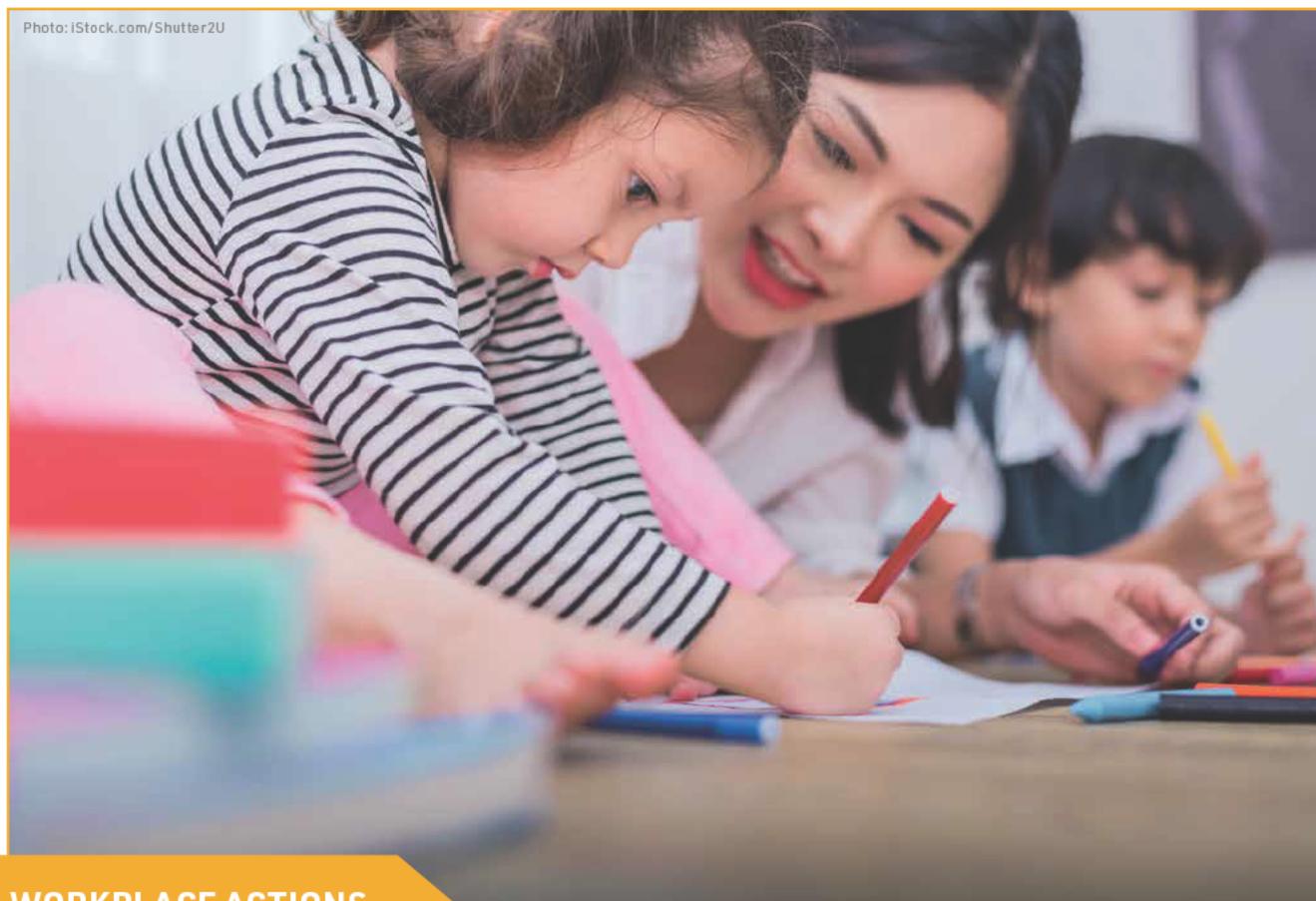
There are many ways for business to make a big difference on unpaid care. This section provides ideas and examples of action companies can take to help tackle the challenges that significant unpaid care and domestic workloads create for women and girls along the value chain: in workplaces, supply chains, the marketplace and in society at large.

WORKPLACE

SUPPLY CHAIN

MARKETPLACE

SOCIETY



### WORKPLACE ACTIONS

- Recognise and support employees with care responsibilities by shouldering some of the costs involved (for example subsidizing childcare costs, providing paid parental leave) and supporting working patterns that are compatible with care responsibilities – such as flexible working hours, no mandatory overtime – and providing spaces for breastfeeding or pumping.
- Create a supportive culture in which men feel empowered alongside women to take advantage of available policies and practices.
- Include workers with care responsibilities in the formulation of workplace policy and in the design and evaluation of programmes.
- Collaborate with firms providing care services – in elder care or childcare, for example – to offer employees access at affordable rates.

## WORKPLACE

**Company example****Aviva and others****Location**

UK/US

**Industry**

Insurance and savings

**Business Action**

Paid parental leave

**4R Framework**

Recognise

Redistribute

**Overview**

In the UK, insurance company Aviva offers 12 months of parental leave, including 26 weeks at full pay. New dads have been taking advantage of this policy in significant numbers, indicating that companies can help address the cultural norms and other barriers that prevent men from taking on and enjoying more responsibility for childcare. In the first 10.5 months of the policy, 67% of new dads at Aviva UK took six months off after the birth of their children and 95% took more than the statutory two weeks off. The average number of paternity days taken by men increased more than 14 times during this period. Even women are taking one month more maternity leave than under the previous policy.<sup>32</sup>

Aviva is not the only company reaping the benefits of increased paid leave for new mothers and fathers. For example, female attrition dropped by 40% at management consulting firm Accenture when it extended paid leave to 16 weeks.<sup>33</sup> In the US, where there is no federal government mandated paid parental leave, and in light of the apparent employee and business benefits, 40% of employers now offer paid leave to both birth parents and non-birth parents.<sup>34</sup> And a number of companies in the US have recently announced increased amounts of leave, like General Mills (12-20 weeks)<sup>35</sup> and The Estée Lauder Companies (20 weeks).<sup>36</sup>

“It’s plain to see how much mums and dads value the precious time with their families when a new child arrives. This is clearly reflected in our figures. When we introduced this policy, we wanted all of our parents to know they can take leave and still have a successful career, regardless of gender. The feedback from our returning parents has been fantastic. Many dads have said it’s helped them to understand what women have experienced for generations, so this fresh perspective is invaluable.”

Caroline Prendergast, Interim Chief People Officer, Aviva<sup>37</sup>

**Company example****InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG)****Location**

China

**Industry**

Hospitality

**Business Action**

Elder care policies

**4R Framework**

Recognise

Redistribute

**Overview**

IHG recognises the importance of enabling colleagues to achieve balance in their lives and offering support in times of need. In China, many employees working in IHG-branded hotels, particularly women, face great pressure to balance their work with their elder care responsibilities. In 2015, IHG reported that more than 50% of its 55,000 colleagues in China were non-local, compared with 29% of its employees worldwide, and that 80% of colleagues wished to return to their hometowns in one to five years.<sup>38</sup> Against this backdrop, the company launched its Best Offers from Hometown programme to enable staff to find new positions in IHG hotels in or close to their hometowns when they need to care for their parents. Since the programme’s inception in 2015, over 3,500 employees have participated, enabling them to meet family commitments while continuing to work within one of the 391 hotels in the IHG estate in China.

“The Best Offers from Hometown programme is a great example of IHG’s commitment to supporting a diverse and inclusive working environment. It provides an opportunity for colleagues to fulfil their family obligations whilst still continuing their career in one of our IHG-branded hotels, and allows us to retain and support our talent.”

Ying Ying Koh, Vice President, Human Resources, IHG Greater China<sup>39</sup>

## SUPPLY CHAIN ACTIONS



Photo: iStock.com/siculodoc

- Engage your suppliers on the cost and risk that unequal unpaid care work may be creating for their employees, their businesses, their communities and societies.
- Drive action by making your expectations clear in your procurement requirements and supplier codes of conduct.
- Collaborate with suppliers as they identify opportunities for action in their own workplaces, supply chains and marketplaces.

## SUPPLY CHAIN

### Company example ACG Fruit (Tesco)

**Location**  
South Africa

**Industry**  
Agribusiness

**Business Action**  
Employer-supported childcare, part-time and flexible work arrangements

**4R Framework**  
Redistribute

#### Overview

ACG Fruit (formerly Afrifresh), a B2B producer and exporter of fresh fruit to various countries around the world including the UK and European Union countries, hires women to pick, grade, and pack fruit on farms as well as work in its head office in administrative and managerial roles. ACG Fruit's customers include retailers like Tesco, one of the world's largest supermarket retailers. Nearly 50% of its seasonal workers are women and their participation is critical to its operations. ACG Fruit offers on-farm crèches for children under the age of eight. Other support includes flexible work arrangements (for example, staggered start times) for head office staff.

ACG Fruit's flexible work arrangements facilitate women's continued participation in professional roles and help to retain experienced workers, and hence increase productivity. At the same time, these arrangements help position the company as an 'employer of choice' in a competitive market for seasonal workers.<sup>40</sup>

“The business case for inclusive supply chains, in which everyone is able to fulfil their potential, is absolutely clear. We believe that suppliers who create supportive working environments that value diversity at all levels not only provide greater benefits to their communities – they will also be the best partners for our business for the long term.”

Stephanie Woods, Commercial Director, Fresh Foods and Commodities, Tesco<sup>41</sup>

## SUPPLY CHAIN

### Company example

#### Walmart/Walmart Foundation

#### Location

South Asia and Central America

#### Industry

Retail

#### Business Action

Training in gender norms

#### 4R Framework

Redistribute

#### Overview

The Women in Factories Program (WiF), launched in 2011 with funding from the Walmart Foundation. The WiF is part of Walmart's Global Women's Economic Empowerment Initiative and a broader set of activities focused on women in retail supply chains.

WiF trained factory workers in both life and professional skills through foundational and advanced courses. The curriculum for WiF was created by the non-profit organisation CARE and covers communications, hygiene, reproductive health, occupational health and safety, and gender sensitivity. The programme was implemented globally by CARE, Business for Social Responsibility (BSR), World Vision, and Swasti. WiF has reached nearly 197,000 women and men in 181 factories in Bangladesh, China, India, Honduras, and El Salvador.<sup>42</sup>

WiF recognises that addressing gender norms is a prerequisite for women's advancement in the workplace. It tackles topics such as gender norms and notions of masculinity and how they affect division of household responsibilities. Participants are taught that they can reduce stress if household work is divided fairly among family members. A study of participants in South Asia found that training caused a significant increase in men's belief that other family members should help with household work.<sup>43</sup> Another study in Central America found that training made it more likely that family members were sharing household tasks.<sup>44</sup>

“The WiF program was designed to help women build confidence and develop skills that would empower them in the workplace, with their families and in their communities. We are encouraged by the positive outcomes shown in the academic research and in the stories told by participating women, and we have taken away important learnings, such as the need to involve all parties – both men and women – to truly effect change.”

Julie Gehrki, VP and COO, Walmart Foundation, Walmart Foundation<sup>45</sup>

## MARKETPLACE ACTIONS



Photo: iStock.com/PeopleImages

- Don't perpetuate outdated stereotypes around unpaid care work in your marketing and advertising – for example, by depicting women and girls doing all the household chores. Instead, use images and messages that show men and boys, women and girls sharing these tasks.
- In the home care and personal care FMCG sectors, invest in the design, production and distribution of low-energy time- and labour-saving products which are affordable and accessible – for example time-saving laundry devices, quick rinse detergent, fuel-efficient cookstoves and food processing equipment.
- Companies that provide care services like elder care and childcare can offer products and services to employers to help them support the unpaid care work responsibilities of their employees, while ensuring adherence to decent pay and work conditions for paid care workers.

## MARKETPLACE

**Company example****Unilever****Location**

India and South Africa

**Industry**

Fast-moving consumer goods

**Business Action**

Innovation in time- and labour-saving products

**4R Framework**

Reduce

**Overview**

In 2016, Unilever introduced a new technology called SmartFoam in its handwash detergent bars and laundry powders, in India with the brand Rin, and in South Africa with the Sunlight 2-in-1 handwashing laundry powder. This is saving time and effort for women and girls, who are largely responsible for handwashing clothes in their households. SmartFoam cuts the number of rinses needed to wash away foam by up to half – or about two buckets per wash – which benefits both women and the environment.

Collecting water – especially when women have to walk long distances to a water source – and doing laundry are some of the most time-consuming household tasks in low-income countries. Rinsing clothes accounts for nearly 40% of household water consumption<sup>46</sup> and 70% of water used in laundry.<sup>47</sup> Reducing the amount of water required for rinsing therefore also reduces women's workloads, freeing up their time for other pursuits, including income-generating activities.

Unilever reports that the SmartFoam proposition worked particularly well in water-scarce geographies of India, contributing to improved brand metrics.

**Company example****Indesit, McCain Foods, P&G, Whirlpool, Unilever, Unstereotype Alliance****Location**

Global

**Industry**

Cross-sector

**Business Action**

Building brands by addressing gender stereotypes and outdated social norms

**4R Framework**Recognise  
Redistribute**Overview**

Gender stereotypes in advertising reinforce social norms that perpetuate the imbalance between men and women in unpaid care work. One study found that a significant number of respondents (52% in the US, 46% in the UK and 40% in Mexico) agreed or strongly agreed that society tells them that it is not good for a boy to be taught how to cook, sew, clean the house and take care of younger children.<sup>48</sup> Similarly, more than 40% agreed or strongly agreed that society tells them that a husband should not have to do household chores.<sup>49</sup>

Recognising the power of advertising in shaping how people think, companies are beginning to tackle gender stereotypes, including around unpaid care work, through their marketing campaigns. In doing so, they are building their brands by connecting more meaningfully with their consumers. Indesit's #Doittogether More than a Toy campaign, for example, promotes the importance of shaping norms related to unpaid care work from a young age, while P&G's Ariel India's #ShareTheLoad campaign encourages men to do more laundry. McCain Foods' We Are Family campaign shows that it is normal for all family members, including dads and grandads, to do unpaid care work. Whirlpool's Everyday Care campaign in the US aims to challenge negative perceptions about men doing tasks like washing, cooking and cleaning. Unilever's Knorr adverts feature fathers and other family members cooking, and a woman as a professional chef. In 2018, Unilever's Dove Men+Care brand announced the focus of its social purpose as campaigning for access to and uptake of paternity leave for men everywhere, so men can enjoy the multiple benefits of helping to look after new arrivals.

Various companies, including Alibaba, Diageo, Mattel, Mars, P&G and Unilever, have joined forces in the Unstereotype Alliance – launched in 2017 by UN Women – that aims to use advertising and other brand-related content to drive positive change and remove harmful gender stereotypes.

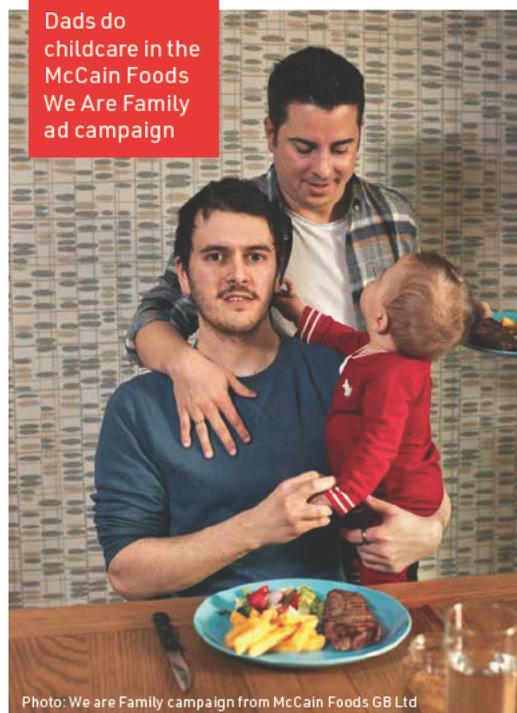
“We Are Family has been one of our most successful campaigns. We therefore see a clear benefit in advertising showing family care roles that challenge stereotypes, both for our business and in order to better reflect what is, for many, modern British family life.”

Mark Hodge, UK Marketing Director, McCain Foods<sup>50</sup>



Dove Men+Care champions access to paternity leave for dads

Photo: Dove Men+Care



Dads do childcare in the McCain Foods We Are Family ad campaign

Photo: We are Family campaign from McCain Foods GB Ltd

“People are telling us that these [unstereotype] type of adverts are 16% more relevant and 25% more enjoyable. Brands that don’t act fast enough are at risk of losing their customers to the brands that do.”

Aline Santos, Executive Vice President of Global Marketing and Head of Diversity and Inclusion, Unilever<sup>51</sup>

## Box 2. Opportunities for action in the care economy

As the global population grows and ages, the increasing demand for childcare, elder care, disability and other forms of care is driving rapid growth in what has been called the ‘care economy’. Unpaid care makes up one part of the care economy – but the paid part is also growing. Whether provided by the state or by the market, paid care is projected to rise from 8.7% of GDP in 2015 to 14.9% in 2030.<sup>52</sup>

Increasing demand creates opportunity for business. Entrepreneurs are starting new care companies, and care companies are partnering with firms in other industries as those firms seek to support their own employees who have unpaid care responsibilities.

For example, [Care.com](https://www.care.com) is an online family care platform that helps families find, manage and pay for care in more than 20 countries. CNN reports that Care.com has partnered with Starbucks to offer Starbucks’ employees 10 subsidised back-up care days for children and adults. When regular care

arrangements fall through – because a nanny is sick, for example – the employee can choose to pay either \$1 an hour for in-home care or \$5 per day for care at a centre.<sup>53</sup>

Similarly, Bright Horizons began as a childcare provider, but now works with employers to offer a range of work-life supports for working families, including back-up care, elder care, college advising and more. The company works with employers like American Express, Bristol-Myers Squibb, PepsiCo and Salesforce to remove obstacles for employees and support them at every life stage.<sup>54</sup>

Growth in the paid care economy could result in 269 million new jobs by 2030. Today, many paid carers work under poor conditions for low pay.<sup>55</sup> As the sector grows, it will be critical for care economy companies to adhere to the principles and practices of decent work, and to support their paid care workers with their own unpaid care responsibilities.

## ACTIONS IN SOCIETY



Photo: Aurelie Marrier d'Unienville/Oxfam

- In the communities where you operate, collaborate with local governments, non-profit organisations and neighbourhood groups to support the installation, operation and management of water, sanitation and energy infrastructure, with the representation and involvement of women and men in the areas impacted.
- Ensure that community investment and economic development programmes that receive corporate support are not unintentionally reinforcing binary gender norms at the household level.
- Support the work of women's rights and other civil society organisations as they call on governments to adopt policies to address unpaid care work and invest in adequate care-related infrastructure and services.

## SOCIETY

### Company example Water & Sanitation for the Urban Poor (WSUP), The Coca-Cola Foundation (TCCF) and Ghana Water Company Limited (GWCL)

**Location**  
Ghana and others

**Industry**  
Utilities

**Business Action**  
Developing infrastructure  
to alleviate unpaid  
care work

**4R Framework**  
Reduce  
Represent

#### Overview

WSUP is a not-for-profit company with a social purpose that helps transform cities to benefit those who lack access to water and sanitation. In 2015, WSUP partnered with TCCF, GWCL and the Districts of Asokore Mampong, Atwima Nwabiagya and Kumasi Metropolitan to bring safe and affordable water to more than 45,000 people in six communities in Kumasi, Ghana, where a large segment of the population lives in informal settlements and lacks access to water.

Without good access to water, women face additional challenges in carrying out tasks such as laundry, house cleaning and cooking. In Ghana, the project built a large elevated tank, 75 standpipes and over 15,000 metres of pipes to connect households to the water supply. Community Management Committees were established to empower local women and men to operate and maintain the standpipes, with responsibility for day-to-day management of the infrastructure and reporting of monthly water sales.

Between 2011 and 2020, WSUP and The Coca Cola Foundation expect to improve water access for 1.5 million people in low-income urban neighbourhoods in Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Uganda, and Zambia. As a result, community members, and particularly women, are saving time that would have otherwise been spent collecting water. These women are now empowered to choose how they spend the time saved.

“Women around the world still spend a collective 200 million hours fetching water each day. For Coca-Cola, this is why we believe in empowering women by extending safe and affordable water services. By providing them with this most basic building block for thriving families, women gain dignity, confidence and more time to spend on paid work.”

Ulrike Sapiro, Senior Director, Water Stewardship & Sustainable Agriculture, The Coca-Cola Company<sup>56</sup>

## SOCIETY

**Company example  
Unilever, Oxfam  
and local partners<sup>57</sup>****Location**

Philippines and Zimbabwe

**Industry**Water and sanitation  
infrastructure**Business Action**Addressing social norms  
and increasing access  
to infrastructure**4R Framework**Recognise  
Reduce  
Redistribute**Overview**

In 2016, Unilever's laundry brand, Surf, launched a three-year programme with Oxfam under its Women's Economic Empowerment and Care (WE-Care) initiative, a programme being implemented in partnership with national women's rights organisations, civil society and businesses in countries in Africa and Asia. The Unilever-Surf and Oxfam programme takes a three-pronged approach to address the impact of unpaid care work on women and girls. First, the programme provides better access to water and laundry infrastructure, with new or improved communal laundries and water centres. Second, it challenges and seeks to change harmful social norms that result in women bearing the brunt of household chores, via a programme of community and individual engagement and a broad-based communications campaign. Third, it advocates for policy change at national and local levels, for example by building relationships with relevant policy makers and supporting them to incorporate unpaid care commitments into laws and policies.<sup>58</sup>

Programme results indicate a nascent shift in social norms, with men in Zimbabwe beginning to take on more unpaid care work following participation in gender training. In the Philippines, the programme successfully advocated for the adoption of two pieces of legislation that now obligate local governments to include measures to address unpaid care in their plans and budgets. As of 2019, the programme had directly or indirectly benefitted nearly 190,000 people through new or improved water and sanitation infrastructure,<sup>59</sup> and reached over 24 million people through social media campaigns.<sup>60</sup>

## Getting started in addressing unpaid care and domestic work in your own company

There are many areas along the value chain where unpaid care and domestic work may be creating unnecessary cost and risk for a business, and where changes to workplace practices might enable workers to more effectively fulfil family care and household responsibilities *and* workplace responsibilities.

Considering how unpaid care work impacts a firm's employees and how that affects the business is a logical place to start to make a difference, before progressing to a more comprehensive value chain approach.

- 1. Explore** the impact of unpaid care work on your own employees.
- 2. Assess** the extent to which your policies enable your employees to manage their unpaid care work responsibilities.
- 3. Quantify** negative impacts of unpaid care and domestic work.
- 4. Identify** opportunities for new policies and practices in priority areas.
- 5. Ensure** employees have a voice in designing policies and initiatives related to unpaid care work.
- 6. Partner** with others that can support your employees and those who live in the communities where you source, manufacture or serve.

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“

I am very happy that there is a crèche here. God willing, one day I will be married and have children and won't need to leave my job, because there is a nursery available.”

Maram Abu Lomdi, female tailor, MAS Kreedat al Saf-Madaba (garment manufacturer), Jordan<sup>61</sup>

“

My wife's work is less flexible than mine; she cannot drop a day's work if our child is sick. Compared to my previous employer, where we had worries about what to do if childcare failed, now [with my flexible workplace] we have peace of mind, which makes me more productive. I can deliver my best at work.

Male senior manager and occasional crèche user, Safaricom HQ (telecoms company), Kenya<sup>62</sup>

“

Job-sharing has allowed me to continue my career in a role I find challenging, while giving me the flexibility to have the time for my son. For our team, they have the access to two people's different experiences.”

Senior Customer Marketing Executive, Unilever Australia and New Zealand<sup>63</sup>



## SDG 5: ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS

**Target 5.4:** Recognise 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.

**Indicator 5.4.1:** Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location.

