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Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)
Topic 1: Unrecognized Care Work
YUNMUN XXXVII

The first topic that CSW will focus on this year is unrecognized care work. Around the world, mothers, daughters, and sisters care for others. They cook, clean, and keep households running. This work keeps families and economies running, yet it is often unpaid, unprotected, and excluded in societies' measures of economic activity.

This issue has been previously discussed, with the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action calling on governments to recognize the value of unpaid work and to find ways to reflect it in national accounts.[1] The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of 2015 took this further, with Target 5.4 committing to, "recogniz[ing] and valu[ing] unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies."[2]

The percentage of the global population that this issue matters for is significant. The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that women perform roughly 76% of unpaid care work worldwide and that more than 600 million women are outside the labor force because of care responsibilities.[3]

Because the UN System of National Accounts, which most countries use to calculate GDP, does not count services that households provide for themselves, this work adds nothing to official economic figures, while identical work done for pay does. The consequences extend into women's lives in other ways: caregivers often lack pensions and health insurance and are often forced to leave marriages with little legal recognition of their contributions.

[1] https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/BDPfA%20E.pdf, see pages 66-67
[2] https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5#targets_and_indicators
[3] https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40dgreports/%40dcomm/%40publ/documents/publication/wcms_633135.pdf

Some may argue that care within a family is a private matter and not a subject for economic or labor policy. Yet there is growing evidence that recognizing and sharing care work benefits both women and the wider economy.[4]

Some countries have begun taking steps in the right direction. For example, China's 2021 Civil Code allows a spouse who took on more domestic duties to seek compensation upon divorce, while other systems still give little weight to homemaking in dividing property.[5] But despite these positive steps, further improvements are needed in this area. Please use the following questions to guide your research:

- What steps can CSW take to help governments measure and reflect unpaid care work in national data?
- How can labor laws, pension systems, and divorce and property laws better recognize and protect unpaid caregivers?
- What public services and policies can governments adopt to reduce unpaid care work, and how can CSW encourage countries to fund them?
- How should the costs of recognizing and reducing care work be financed, and what support mechanisms should CSW recommend for countries with limited resources?
- What policies, such as paid parental leave for fathers or public awareness campaigns, can encourage men to take on a more equal share of care work, and what role should CSW play in shifting social norms?

These questions should serve as a starting point for your research, but do not feel limited to these questions. While researching, remember that you are representing your country and should stay aligned with said country's approach. Please also remember that plagiarism and prohibited AI usage will not be tolerated.

[4] *Ibid*.
[5] https://english.court.gov.cn/2021-11/09/c_766962.htm

Feel free to reach out to me at ekohl2@mail.yu.edu with any questions. I'm excited to hear your ideas!

Sincerely,

Lizzie Kohl

Chair, Commission on the Status of Women

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