

The paid care sector is a significant source of potential job creation. Here too, however, there are significant gender inequalities in terms of the people performing the care work and the working conditions of care professionals. As discussed, women constitute a high proportion of care professions, which are often poorly paid and undervalued. Paid care can be provided through centre-based (or institutional) and home-based services. The majority of home-based care is provided by domestic workers in the informal economy. In some countries, much of this care is also provided by public or private agencies. Regardless of the level of informality, the quality of employment in this sector is also often very poor, as seen above. As this chapter will show, despite a continuous demand for such home-based services, few governments have been able to ensure decent working conditions, including competitive wages, full-time work, limits on working time, and effective access to social protection.

The ILO international labour standards, promoting non-discrimination, equal remuneration for work of equal value, social protection, maternity protection and support to workers with family responsibilities, provide a road map for efforts to address inequalities in the labour market and in the household. In particular, work-family measures are national, community, sectoral and workplace policy solutions intended to facilitate workers' access to, permanence in and progress within quality work by explicitly and systematically addressing and supporting their unpaid household and care responsibilities.

As with the discussions in previous chapters, Chapter III is divided into two sections. The first, section A, discusses the gender gap in unpaid work distribution, defines care as a form of work and reviews the main trends and challenges in the provision of a comprehensive framework of work-family policies, including the extent of care provisions and the working conditions of care providers. The second, section B, assesses the impact of existing policies in addressing care deficits and provides evidence-based policy recommendations and country experiences. These may inform the work of promoting a coherent framework to achieve the harmonization of work and family responsibilities, which, in turn, will serve as a key factor behind policy to achieve substantive equality between women and men.

## **A. Main trends and challenges in the provision of an integrated framework of work-family policies**

### **1. Unpaid household and care work as a form of work mainly performed by women and girls**

Every person in the world benefits from care work. The overwhelming majority of people will require care or support in several stages of their lives and the quality of care received will substantially affect their well-being. Care can be paid or unpaid and comes in the form of childcare, elderly care, care or support for persons with temporary or permanent disabilities and illnesses. Care is provided through a variety of arrangements, which include families and households, the State, the not-for-profit sector (including the social economy, voluntary and community service provision) and markets (such as private care providers, including domestic workers, and commercial services). The degree to which the four institutions (sometimes referred to as the “care diamond”) provide care differs depending on the national context and the extent to which governments support each dimension of care provision (Razavi, 2007).

Unpaid care work is defined as the provision of care or support for persons for no explicit monetary reward, within and across families and households (ibid.). Unpaid care work also includes all volunteer work for community services and some housework. Direct care usually includes attending, bathing, feeding (including breastfeeding), and interacting with family members (such as playing with children, assisting with homework), accompanying them on medical visits and administering medicines. Household work such as cleaning, shopping for food preparation or cooking is also directly related to care or support for family members (ibid.).

There is an expectation that, from a young age, women will perform the majority of unpaid housework and unpaid care work (Boudet et al., 2012). An ILO survey in 33 countries showed that the number of girls aged 7–14 far exceeded that of boys in the performance of household chores, which often included taking care of younger siblings or elders. In some countries, such as Uganda, girls and boys spent almost an equal amount of time in unpaid work, with girls spending slightly more time on household chores in Mongolia, the Philippines and Romania. The ratios were higher in Brazil (2 to 1) and Portugal (2.5 to 1) and even exceeded 4 to 1 in Senegal.<sup>45</sup> This early gender division of labour follows women into their adult lives and firmly establishes the unequal division of household and care work.

45. Data are from the most recent year between 1998 and 2006. Figures extracted from the ILO SIMPOC, Household survey Datasets.