



# DAILY EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

TOPIC

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**ADDRESSING GENDER INEQUITIES  
IN CARE WORK**

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## ADDRESSING GENDER INEQUITIES IN CARE WORK

### Context

- Care work is often undervalued and disproportionately carried by women, reinforcing long-standing gender inequities, despite remaining a cornerstone of social and economic well-being.

### About the Care Work

- Care work** — *both paid and unpaid* — encompasses *childcare, elder care, healthcare, and domestic work*, forming the backbone of social and economic stability.
- Globally, women spend significantly **more time than men on unpaid care work**—household chores, childcare, elder care, and community service.
- According to the **International Labour Organization (ILO)**, women carry out over **three times as much unpaid care work as men**, limiting their opportunities for career advancement and economic independence.
  - It fuels gender gaps in workforce participation and earnings.

### Need For Care Ecosystem in India

- Rising Care Deficit:** India's elderly population (60+ years) aims to reach 227 million by 2036, many requiring continuous physical, emotional, and medical support.
  - Meanwhile, **traditional family support systems** are weakening due to **urbanisation**, and women continue to bear the brunt of caregiving — often sacrificing their own economic potential and wellbeing.
- Unpaid Care Work:** Most care work in India is unpaid and performed by women. According to **Time Use Surveys (2019, 2024)**, Indian women spend **nearly 10 times more time than men on unpaid domestic tasks**.
  - SBI Research (2023)** estimated women's unpaid care work at 22.7 lakh crore, highlighting its immense but unacknowledged economic value.
- Growing Demand for Care Services:** India's aging population is projected to reach 20 crore by 2031, with nearly 20% of the total population expected to be elderly by 2050.
  - It underscores the need for specialized elder care services, including dementia care, assisted living, and home-based healthcare.

### Concerns: Engendered Care Services in India

- Size and Structure Paid Care Work:** India's paid care sector employs around 36 million people, with **women comprising 56.6%** of this workforce.
  - However, more than 99% of personal care jobs are informal, with poor working conditions and limited legal protections.
  - Marginalised communities, including SCs, STs, and OBCs, make up over two-thirds of the care workforce, reflecting deeply rooted structural inequities.
- Precarity and Gender Wage Gaps:** While 88.7% of paid care workers are 'regularly employed', job security is rare — especially in the unorganised sector, which employs 43% of care workers.
  - Even within the organised sector, over 41% of jobs lack formal contracts.
  - The **gender wage gap** among self-employed care workers is a staggering 61%.
- Systemic Barriers to Gender Equity:**
  - Occupational Segregation:** Women are clustered in lower-status care roles.
  - Gender Norms:** Social expectations confine women to unpaid caregiving.
  - Limited Education & Training:** Many women lack access to skills that enable transition to better-paid roles.
  - Burden of Unpaid Work:** Time spent on unpaid care limits women's labour force participation and career progression.

### Policy Roadmap for a Stronger Care Work Economy

- **Recognise and Measure Unpaid Care Work:** Expand Time Use Surveys, and launch dedicated national surveys to account for unpaid care in policymaking and economic data.
- **Invest in Public Care Infrastructure:** Build affordable childcare, eldercare, and community health facilities, and improve water and sanitation services to reduce care burdens.
- **Redistribute Care within Households:** Promote shared caregiving through paid parental and eldercare leave, and campaigning to shift norms around gender and caregiving.
- **Formalise and Protect Paid Care Work:** Recognise care work as skilled labour, provide fair wages, legal contracts, and social protections, and offer skill development and upskilling for women in care sectors.
- **Close Gender Gaps:** Enforce equal pay for equal work, facilitate women's entry into higher-paid, supervisory care roles, and expand access to adult education and vocational training.
- **Plan for Future Care Needs:** Project care demands linked to demographic changes, align training and employment policies accordingly, and encourage Public-Private Partnerships and CSR investments in care services.
- **Build Inclusive Collaboration:** Engage government, civil society, private sector, and communities in care system reforms.

### Related Government Initiatives

- **National Programme for the Health Care of the Elderly (NPHCE):** It aims to provide accessible healthcare services for senior citizens, integrating primary, secondary, and tertiary care.
- **Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY):** It offers financial protection for medical expenses, benefiting caregivers and families.
- **National Health Mission (NHM):** Supports healthcare infrastructure, including maternal and child health services, which are crucial for care work.
- **Women and Child Development Programs:** Various schemes under the Ministry of Women and Child Development focus on childcare, nutrition, and support for caregivers.

### Conclusion

- Care work is central to a functioning economy and a just society. India needs to bring care work to the policy forefront—recognizing it, redistributing it, and rewarding it, to bridge the gender divide in economic opportunity.

Source: BL

### Mains Practice Question

[Q] How do cultural and societal norms influence the persistence of gender inequities in care work, and what steps do you believe are most effective in challenging and redistributing these responsibilities?

