

# Work/Life Balance and Ageing Study : Policy and Legislative Responses for the Support of Carers

Caribbean preparatory meeting for the Fourth Regional Intergovernmental Conference on Ageing and the Rights of Older Persons

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# “Work/Life Balance : Its impact on the Productivity of Working Men and Women and on the Wellbeing of Ageing Populations in Trinidad ”

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- ◎ Core Objective : To generate a body of work and evidence in the area of work/life balance and ageing to achieve the following:
  - Empirical data on W/L balance which can inform employers and employees
  - Generate interest among employers , community and policy makers to enable policy advocacy as regards work, family and ageing and the gaps that currently exist in the society

# Work/Life Balance and Ageing Project

- Focus social attention on the needs of the family and ageing as central to public discourse
- Add a gendered analysis of ageing to the field of gerontology
- Raise public awareness and influence changes in attitudes and practices towards work/life balance and the challenges of ageing

# The Performance of Care Work:

- The labour of meeting [the needs of children, the household, the sick, the elderly etc.]– which we call care work – is a complex activity that has profound implications for personal, social and economic well-being.
- Care work is not just a cornerstone of our economy – it is a rock-bottom foundation.
- Care work provides the basis for our human infrastructure, and we need it to navigate through life as surely as we need our roads and bridges (Albelda et al, 2009)

# Preliminary Findings

- ⦿ Complexity of care work also revealed by the study.
- ⦿ Not a linear task.
- ⦿ Frequently the same carer in the home may have multiple caring responsibilities which may extend to:
  - > Children /schools/extra-curricular/homework .
  - > Other unpaid labour within the household including shopping for food and other items .
  - > Sick persons ( children, elderly, others): hospital or doctor's visits.
  - > Persons with disabilities who may or may not live in the same household

- > Elderly persons (parents or others) who may or may not live in the same household.
- > Many permutations and combinations of care work
- Many home carers may also be employed and therefore have to balance multiple caring responsibilities with work. This poses almost insurmountable challenges .
- Carers may themselves be elderly e.g. elderly mothers or grandparents who may also be in the labour market.
- Generally, persons performing unpaid care, especially care of the elderly, either lack the means to afford paid care or the elderly themselves cannot afford paid care.



# Preliminary Findings

- Frequently, only means of income may be the non-contributory Old Age Pension or the National Insurance and heavy reliance therefore in the unpaid care of relatives.
- Persons in the middle or high income brackets can usually afford paid care.

# Preliminary findings

- ◎ Gender dimensions of care work :
  - > Females still perform the majority of unpaid care work , including care of the elderly, within a context of complex relational interactions.
  - > Paid care work , whether formal or informal , performed primarily by low-skilled women who frequently must also balance paid care work with unpaid care in their own homes .
  - > Care work, whether paid or unpaid , still regarded as women's work and remains undervalued, despite its importance in managing and ordering of the society from birth to death (life cycle) and its immense contribution to facilitating productive work .



# Emerging principles requiring legislative and policy responses for the support of carers

- The rapidly ageing population in T&T (and in the wider Caribbean ) requires an urgent policy and legislative response to ensure that elderly persons who need to be cared for and who are without means are provided with quality care and that those who care for them are well supported by the State and the private sector.
- Care work is neither linear nor easily measurable and caring for the elderly cannot always be delinked from the continuum of care work provided throughout the life cycle. Supporting childcare , for example, also benefits care of the elderly.

## Cont'd

- Care work, including care for the elderly extends beyond individuals and ,whether paid or unpaid, benefits society as a whole. It comprises the country's human infrastructure and promotes the health, development and well being of the entire population.
- It must therefore be seen as a public good and be valued as such by the State and the private sector through tangible and measurable responses. It is still a largely invisible public good that needs to be made visible and recognised as intrinsic to the working of the society.

## Cont'd

- ⦿ The gender dimensions of care work remain invisible to a large extent in policies and programmes for the aged .
- ⦿ Caring for the elderly is not linear. It is cross-cutting across gender, ageing , poverty. Policy and legislative responses need to be framed from this standpoint.

## Some recommendations for the way forward

- The rights of carers - formal or informal paid care- must be protected through strengthening and effective implementation of Minimum Wage or other labour legislation regulating conditions of work . Paid carers providing homecare are usually hired as domestic employees and are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Unskilled carers in residential homes are also vulnerable.
- Ensure domestic employees are included under the governing labour legislation and entitled to be protected as workers ( Industrial Relations Act in T&T).

- Support rights education and information to carers in ageing and other cross-cutting policies
- Make the work of carers visible through time – use surveys and /or implement legislation where it exists ( T&T : Counting Unremunerated Work Act , 1996 ).

## Cont'd

- See UNECLAC, Social Panorama of Latin America, May 2017, Chap. IV, Section C, The Contribution of time –use data to equality policies.
- Use information from time use surveys in other jurisdiction as an advocacy tool for recognising and valuing care work.
- Example : The Care Sector in Massachusetts .
- 2007 paid care work accounted for 22 per-cent of the Commonwealth's paid labor force (800,000 workers).
- Commonwealth residents 16 years and older spent an average of 4.8 hours a day providing unpaid care or supervising those who need care.

- All together, Massachusetts residents perform 24.9 million hours a day of unpaid care work (the equivalent of 3.1 million full-time workers).
- Valuing unpaid care work at the typical wages for paid care workers, the total value of unpaid care time is \$151.6 billion annually.
- Women comprise 75 percent of paid care workers and provide 64 percent of all time devoted to unpaid care activities (Albelda et al, 2009).

- Introduce in the public sector flexible working hours, child care centres, home work centres for working mothers/parents and for persons with caring responsibilities for elderly parents/other relatives. Ensure that these measures are integrated in ageing, gender and economic policies .
- Provide incentives for the private sector to implement these measures .



- Ensure that the gender dimensions of ageing and of care work are fully integrated in both gender and ageing policies , particularly the valuing of care work and measures that promote equal participation of men in unpaid care work in the home.

- Implement a programme of short breaks for unpaid carers : especially elderly women , carers looking after relatives with dementia or other serious illness but also other carers who have multiple caring responsibilities and must balance their work life with their caring responsibilities (GAPP in T&T or trained volunteers etc.).
- Provide training for paid and unpaid home carers

- Introduce a regulatory framework for residential care and set standards for carers, including the need for training ( T&T: Homes for Older Persons Act, 2007).
- Establish collaborative partnerships with tertiary and other institutions for the development of certified training for carers.

- Thank you.