CARE IS ESSENTIAL INFRASTRUCTURE



The Case of the Philippines

Research Brief

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the dependence of our societies on systems of care and caregiving to survive and thrive. This support system, however, has been mostly unpaid if not totally unrecognized for far too long. Its resulting negative effects have disproportionately affected women and girls around the world, especially in the Global South.

Oxfam has actively worked on context-specific evidence on care work by engaging with communities, governments, the private sector, and civil society through their Women's Economic Empowerment and Care (WE-Care) Program since 2013. This research is part of Oxfam's ongoing reflection and work on care that examines conversations and debates on care infrastructure and care infrastructure investments in the Philippines. The study also discusses the connection between care infrastructure investments and macro-level socioeconomic policies and civil society initiatives. Through four case stories, the research outlines examples of care infrastructure (non) investments and its influence to women's economic empowerment.

To examine (non)investments in care infrastructure is to understand how key actors of the society and community members understand and pay attention to it. Conscientization is vital in this regard since it opens-up pathways to transform our consciousness concerning care. Continuously educating the population about care and why we need to value care can define clear demands surrounding care infrastructure investments. Otherwise, the public-private divide on care provision, and the deeply-ingrained binary perspectives on sex and gender roles on care will continue because we are socio-culturally conditioned to accept it.

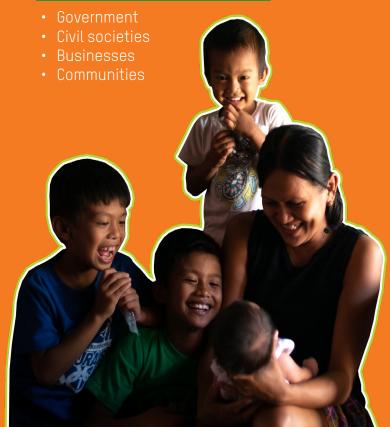
WHAT IS CARE INFRASTRUCTURE?

A network of structures, frameworks, and systems that enables and supports the delivery, access, and provision of care to a wide segment of the population that is necessary for survival and well-being, particularly to those who have less in life.

WHAT ARE THE CARE INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS IN THE PHILIPPINES?

- Physical care infrastructure
- Care services
- Care policies and regulations
- Employment-related care provision
- Norm-reorienting investments.

WHO ARE THE CARE ACTORS?



stories demonstrating how (non)investments in and livelihood across four types of pre-selected communities: (1) WE-Care program area, (2) non-WE-Care program area, (3) urban community, and (4) rural community.

KEY FINDINGS

WE-Care areas

address women's needs and potentially contribute

Non-WE-Care areas

a few of such focus on women's needs and their economic empowerment

Urban and rural communities (both non-WE-Care areas)

The understanding of respondents of what care infrastructure investments entail to women's economic empowerment is also limited. They were unable to perceive if care infrastructure investments have specific impacts on women's needs and their economic empowerment because they view such investments supporting the needs of the general population and not just of women.

KEY INSIGHTS

conversations about care infrastructure is limited. Care infrastructure is always understood in the

b. Civil society organizations and women's rights movements have a clearer articulation on the links between the issue of care and women's economic empowerment. CSOs and WROs recognize the value economic development, as women remain to be absorbers of care related tasks needed to fuel the economic system.

- articulation on the role of care for the country's well-being has been lacking in public policy, public-private divide, wherein care is situated in the private so it is rarely given attention in the public, political sphere.
- d. The current understanding of care work in closely linked to the expectation that care work is socio-cultural conditioning that providing care is the natural role of women and girls.
- e. The current care infrastructure investments in the country are a by-product of other ongoing policies or programs by the civil society, the government, and the private sector.
- f. Existing care infrastructure investments, despite being a tangential outcome of government policies and programs, have the potential improve the lives of women in the community.
- g. Lastly, based on current investments and articulated demands on care, the study identifies employment-related care provisions, and normreorienting investments.

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