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It’s finally here—the latest issue of the WE-Care Stories. And we’re extremely happy to share it with you.

Over the last couple of months, WE-Care has embarked on an exciting journey to reflect on what we have accomplished so far and use these reflections to plan for more journeys ahead. Our team met in Uganda in August—our first face-to-face meeting as a programme in more than two years (page 3)—to foster an inclusive platform for inter-country learning and innovation. It’s been a pleasure to work alongside passionate women and men care advocates from the WE-Care countries and partners.

In this issue of the WE-Care Stories, our team reinforces our commitment to help address care-related challenges in the African region. In Zimbabwe, for instance, WALPE and Oxfam presented a gender-responsive budget proposal to 45 Members of Parliament to encourage them to craft policies and enact legislation that would take UCDW from the debate phase to take actions (page 7). Meanwhile, in Kenya, a Technical Working Group composed of 14 care policy champions was formed in Kitui County to ensure care is prioritized at policy level and by the private sector (page 12). All of these and more in this issue!

Our wish is that you enjoy this newsletter as much as we’ve enjoyed developing it for you. Alas, thank you for your unending support to WE-Care.

—Vin
To foster a culture of continued learning, Oxfam in Uganda, the Uganda Women’s Network (UWONET), Gals Forum International, and Forum for Rights Awareness and Monitoring (FORAMO)—as the implementing partners of the WE-Care Programme in Uganda—hosted the 2022 WE-Care Learning Meeting at Mestil Hotel in Kampala from 1 to 5 August.

The event was intended to provide a platform for inter-country learning and innovation, connecting the gender equality conversations at national, regional, and global levels.

The meeting brought together over 40 representatives from the global team, HECA regional platform, Pan-Africa Programme and partners, and Oxfam country teams and partners from Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Zimbabwe.

The Ugandan Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development exhibited an elevated level of commitment through the call by Dr. Angella Nakafeero, the Commissioner for Gender and Women Affairs, towards adopting a multi-stakeholder approach, building a collective strong policy agenda, influencing on critical policy shifts, and transforming partnerships with other actors—such as the private sector—in building the progressive narrative on UCDW in Uganda.

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She recognized the fact that unpaid care is a form of silent discrimination, affecting women’s access to education, employment, and social services, drawing experience from the spike in gender-based violence in communities and the linkage of unpaid care work to the adverse effects of climate change.

Dr. Nakafeero recommended exploration and advocacy towards adoption of gender appropriate technology in reducing the UCDW that women and girls provide within a transformative era.

Ms. Rita Aciro, the Executive Director of UWONET, highlighted some of the headways realized over the years. Among them were policy shifts in the existing legal and policy frameworks, shift in attitudes and beliefs on UCDW, and strides by the Uganda Bureau of Standards and Uganda Planning Authority to include aspects of UCDW in the national surveys.

The opening programme of the learning meeting was also graced by Oxfam in Uganda Country Director Francis Odokorach. As a strong advocate of addressing UCDW, he recognized the fact that Oxfam had deeply invested in programmes that promote inclusion and empowerment of women and girls and that “it is no longer strange to talk about care.”

Mr. Odokorach emphasized that through policy influencing and advocacy, there is need for government’s investment and budgetary allocation to public social sectors to reduce the care workload on women.

Overall, the learning event provided an opportunity for actors’ introspection on global commitments on the care agenda while strategizing on the program’s future, as we work towards a just and feminist future.

For questions on the WE-Care Uganda programme, write to Nivatiti Nandujja (nivatiti.nandujja@oxfam.org).

For questions about the global WE-Care programme, write to Ruth Oloo (ruth.olo@oxfam.org).
UGANDA

WE-CARE TEAM INTERACTS WITH WOMEN INFORMAL WORKERS/VENDORS IN KAMPALA

As part of the WE-CARE learning event, participants visited some implementation areas in Kampala.

On the photo, an Oxfam staff member tries to carry a basket of soursop, which is something that women vendors carry every day to make a living.

One of the teams visited and interacted with the Naguru women traders, who are partners of WE-Care in the community. The women shared their challenges as well as opportunities.

“We risk our lives to provide for our families; we are constantly under raids from Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) who consider our business illegal. Despite the risks, our husbands have left the housework to us, we are not asking them to pay us for the work we do at home, but their involvement in the domestic work,” Florence Aciro said.

Florence Aciro is one of the women entrepreneurs in Kampala urban city (often referred to as street vendors). In the last elections, Florence took up the leadership role to contest for Naguru Women Councillorship, which she won through the support of her husband.

She has stood high and low in the peak of championing the care and domestic...
work agenda within her community. She has worked with other women in establishing three women cooperatives, so that they can tap into existing government opportunities.

Through her position, she was able to create awareness on sharing care work, mobilize women groups to get funding from government programs, install security lights and cameras in Naguru slums, set up a space at a local church to serve as daycare for women vendors, secure funding for spring wells installation in Nakawa division.

She continues to engage with the husbands of the women members to support their wives and partners with unpaid care and domestic work, which would create time for them to participate in other economic activities.

For another trader named Among: “I am more comfortable being a single mother than having a partner. You can imagine risking your life on the street only to come back to a man grabbing your money to go drinking while expecting you to do all the housework including taking care of him.”

Despite the challenges, the women traders have continued to explore working with the male change agents within the communities to engage in changing attitude, beliefs, practices, and social norms on UCDW.

During the field visit, one of the Oxfam staff explored walking in the shoes of a street vendor, carrying a basket of soursop. He shared the experience as hectic, and he felt the burden the vendor endured carrying a child on her back, traveling long distance in search of buyers, all amid the chances of being arrested in dire need of providing for her children.

Two other WE-Care teams visited stay-at-home mother and male champions in Kawuku and council officers in KCCA Nakawa.

The field visits were organized to learn more from the experiences of community members through practical interactions, as well as to showcase partners’ work in different areas in Kampala.

For questions, write to Nivatiti Nandujja (nivatitit.nandujja@oxfam.org).
WE-CARE PARTNER WALPE AND OXFAM HOLD BREAKFAST MEETING WITH PARLIAMENTARIAN TO PRESENT 2023 RESPONSIVE DUMMY BUDGET PROPOSAL

File Image

ON 27 SEPTEMBER 2022, THE WOMEN’S ACADEMY FOR LEADERSHIP AND POLITICAL EXCELLENCE (WALPE), WITH SUPPORT FROM OXFAM, HELD A BREAKFAST MEETING WITH 45 MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT TO PRESENT A DUMMY GENDER RESPONSIVE BUDGET AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE 2023 NATIONAL BUDGET.

The Members of Parliament (MPs) were from five portfolio committees, namely, the Portfolio Committee on Finance and Economic Development, Health and Child Care, Public Service Labour and Social Welfare, Local Government, Rural and Urban Development, and the Women’s Caucus.

A total of twenty-seven female MPs and eighteen male MPs attended. Other participants were representatives from the Zimbabwe Gender Commission (ZGC), Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, and five local media houses.

The objectives of the meeting were to increase knowledge and understanding of the importance of prioritising social service delivery when allocating funds in the national budget in ways that would allow women to be empowered as development actors at both local and national level; and to raise awareness on the need for Parliament to craft

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policies and enact legislation that would take UCDW from the debate phase to take actions at Parliamentary and Government levels that emphasises the importance of shifting the public’s perceptions and narratives, so that UCDW is recognised, reduced, represented, and redistributed.

WALPE handed a copy of the dummy budget to each legislator present which they will further use during future budget consultations. A presentation of the dummy budget was followed up with a plenary session.

The dummy budget prioritised investment in water and sanitation, energy, education, health, and women empowerment.

WALPE also stressed on the need for Government to recognise the contribution that women make in other key areas of the economy, such as land, taxation, mining, and decision making around the devolution agenda.

Most MPs agreed that prioritising social service delivery is critical to creating space for women to participate in leadership and community developmental processes.

Both male and female MPs in attendance felt that UCDW, which is exacerbated by poor social service delivery affects, is a major barrier to women’s and girls’ economic empowerment. It also limits their participation in public meetings.

Honourable Goodluck Kwaramba, who has previously been engaged by WALPE on UCDW, indicated that she is now a champion of UCDW in her constituency, as she engaged women from her community to unpack UCDW and raise the voice and agency of ordinary women in her community. She shared that most women noted that UCDW affects their participation in community and leadership processes, as it takes up a lot of their time.

During the plenary discussions, MPs present reached consensus that UCDW must be recognised and women should be rewarded in the form of a pension or allowance for the care work that they perform.

Some legislators, such as Honourable Christopher Chingosho and Perseverance Zhou, shared examples of health conditions that women develop due to the heavy care work they undertake at home.

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Above all, carers must be given the space to represent themselves and claim their rights, so that women’s work is valued in the economy and women informal workers gain rights and respect, free from all forms of violence and abuse.

Honourable Tapiwa Mashakada noted that UCDW is a vital cog in the economy. Parliament should now start the process of crafting policies and enact legislations or laws that codify UCDW. He recommended that WALPE should indicate areas in the national budget where resources must be shifted from and be increased as investment towards social services, education, and health.

Meanwhile, Honourable Tatenda Mavetera was of the view that if UCDW was to be rewarded, it would lose its cultural value, as it is an integral part of what defines women in Zimbabwe.

Honourable Robson Nyathi concurred with Honourable Mavetera. However, he stated that there can never be adequate value placed on women’s work, as societies cannot be sustained without the care work done by women at household, community, and public levels. Government has the responsibility and obligation to invest in care work services and infrastructure and relieve women and girls of this onerous task.

The various Portfolio Committees committed to push the said issues during the upcoming budget consultations:

- To place before Parliament motions that would debate leading to UCDW policies and legislation that recognises and governs UCDW.
- A copy of the dummy budget be submitted to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development.
- MPs requested for a learning and exchange visit to a country with emerging and best practices on policy and legislation governing UCDW.
- Another session to be done soon after the budget consultations to check through whether aspects of the discussion and commitments are reflected in the 2023 national budget.
- Women delivering at rural health centres to receive a birth hamper/kit that contains items like cord clamps, sterile gloves, mesh underwear, disinfecting liquid, plastic-backed pads, and other basic medical, reusable, and sterilized supplies, so that pregnant women do not have to buy these essential medicines and materials.
- That Government introduce paid paternity leave for men so that men are present during their wives and partners after childbirth.
- The need for improved infrastructure development of healthcare facilities countrywide, with a specific focus on rural areas which are mostly shunned by healthcare professionals.
- Having a pro-poor budget, which zooms in on child-headed families and families that are headed by single parents and the elderly.
- Improved access to social services such as water, sewer, and green energy in order to reduce the load of care work on women and girls.
- Introduce proper taxation mechanism of the informal sector, which is dominated by women, so that they can benefit through establishment of day-care centres for their children that are close to vending points. (Photos by Helen Kadirire/WALPE)

For questions, write to Regis Mtutu (RMtutu@oxfam.org.uk).

WE-CARE STORIES JUL-SEP 2022
In March 2022, the Women’s Coalition of Zimbabwe (WCoZ) submitted a petition to the Parliament of Zimbabwe on the gendered impacts of UCDW and the need for policy interventions to address the challenge.

The petition to the Parliament was meant to fulfil constitutional requirements with regard to recognising UCDW as an economic and development issue in the national policy agenda, as well as to prioritise gender responsive social security and protection measures, such as basic income grants and pensions.

Following the petition, the Parliament of Zimbabwe through the Portfolio Committee on Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises Development conducted consultative meetings in Masvingo, Bulawayo, Marondera, Mutare, and Gweru from 29 August to 2 September 2022 to gather views on recognition of UCDW.

Speaking at the public hearing, the Chairperson of WCoZ Economic Empowerment Cluster, Muchanyara Mukamuri, said that: “The Minister of Finance Prof Mthuli Ncube, in his budget, should finance certain sections that will relieve women from poverty. This will ease the load of UCDW on women and girls.”

Another participant, Grace Mazambani, added that government should avail cheaper time and saving equipment/machinery, such as duty free and or import tax rebates on washing machines, dishwashers, and solar geysers to alleviate the heavy load that women and girls face when doing care work.

Communities likewise demanded nearby sources of clean water and green energy as part of efforts to recognise, redistribute, reduce UCDW, as well as increase representation of women in decision making positions.

WE-Care in Zimbabwe will continue to follow up on this action agenda.

*For questions, write to Regis Mtutu (RMtutu@oxfam.org.uk).*
Vendors Initiative for Social and Economic Transformation (Viset) is part of a steering committee working group on unpaid care and domestic work (UCDW).

The working group is convened by the Women’s Coalition of Zimbabwe in collaboration with Oxfam Zimbabwe. Other members of the working group include PADARE, Shamwari Yemwanasikana, Women’s Academy for Leadership and Political Excellence, Hope for a Child in Christ, Bekezela and Bethany, to mention a few.

Together with the organisations stated above, Viset recently participated in the Parliamentary Public Hearings conducted by the Portfolio Committee on Women’s Affairs, Community Small and Medium Enterprises Development from August 29 to September 2, 2022 on recognising UCDW.

The public hearings sought to find out the specific barriers that UCDW creates for sustainable development in Zimbabwe.

The hearings, the first of their kind, provided a platform for the public to be able to explain to policymakers how investing in quality, accessible and affordable public services and infrastructure in Zimbabwe can address unequal UCDW and unlock progress on multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The first port of call was Marondera, where participants spoke on the need for policies to be changed to ensure they recognise UCDW. Government at all levels was exhorted to support gender-sensitive budgeting.

An improvement in social service delivery would see the lessening of UCDW burden as much time was being lost in queuing for essential needs such as potable water. The COVID-19 pandemic saw many women saddled with caring for family members, keeping them away from economic activities, and yet they were excluded from any cushioning mechanism.

Domboshava Viset co-ordinator Mr Mazhambe emphasised on the need to educate men on the challenges of UCDW and the need to alter some cultural norms that perpetuates suppression of women rights.

Another Viset member Mary Nyadome proposed that as part of their corporate social responsibility, organisations doing work in communities must give back part of their proceeds and resources to support efforts towards UCDW.

READ THE FULL ARTICLE HERE
THROUGH THE WORK OF THE ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE IN KENYA (AWAK), WE-CARE MESSAGES HAVE REACHED THE KITUI RURAL SUB COUNTY, FOLLOWING THE FORMATION OF THE WE-CARE INTERSECTORAL WORKING GROUP IN JULY 2022.

The group—which is made up of influential community members such as village elders, church leaders, youth leaders, teachers, S.H.G leaders, and C.B.O leaders, among others—has been working tirelessly to ensure that UCDW-related messages are widely spread and embraced.

They have interacted with various groups of community members who have supported the idea of addressing UCDW. Most importantly, they have been able to address the issues and concerns raised by the community members, especially with regard to men’s involvement in care work. As a result, men in the area have now changed the narrative and committed to recognize, represent, redistribute, and reduce UCDW.

The Intersectoral Working Group was formally registered as a community-based organization under the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection on the 8 September 2022. This was done to ease the group’s operation in the county. The group was registered as “Mwangaza Community Care” that translates to lighting up the community through WE-CARE.

ENGAGING YOUNG AND OLD MEN

On 15 August 2022, the AWAK project team successfully engaged the old continued on page 13...
and young men from Kitui Rural Sub County on the WE-Care agenda.

There was representation from across the board, i.e., chiefs, assistant chiefs, ward administrators, pastors, teachers, football team coaches, youth coordinators, village elders, farmers, and college boys.

The discussions and deliberations were exclusively on their role in addressing UCDW. What stood out most during the forum was their commitment to change the narrative on the retrogressive cultural norms that speak against the involvement of the men in UCDW.

They termed them as mere beliefs that only require a mindset shift. They all agreed that the mindset shift begins right with them, so that they can lead as examples and can reach out to other men to support the same agenda.

The teachers present pressed on the importance of shifting the mindset of young boys right from the early school years.

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**THE 14 WE-CARE POLICY CHAMPIONS IN KITUI COUNTY**

To champion the WE-Care agenda across Kitui County and influence care infrastructure through policy adoption and representation, a Technical Working Group (TWG) was formed in July 2022. The group, which is made up of 14 committed leaders, is led by the Kitui County Government representatives from the Ministry of Gender and Social Services.

The TWG has been committed to influence care policies through CIDP participation. The group has leaders from CSOs, WROs, caregivers, and community influencers that understand and are determined to ensure care is prioritized at policy level and by the private sector.

For question, reach out to Judy Matu at judymatu@gmail.com.
GLOBAL GOALS WEEK: WE ALL HAVE A ROLE IN ENABLING WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

THIS ARTICLE WAS WRITTEN BY PURITY JEBOR, A PROGRAM OFFICER AT YOUTH ALIVE KENYA, TO MARK THE GLOBAL GOALS WEEK. PURITY LEADS THE SOCIAL WELLBEING AND GENDER EQUITY PROGRAM. SHE IS AN ARDENT UNPAID CARE WORK CHAMPION.

We all aspire to be in a world of opportunities, sustainability, fairness, equity, and non-discrimination. How does it feel waking up every day to an environment that is bright, and has clean air, to a society with upright individuals, enough resources for everyone, and a safe space for political expression?

Globally, progressive efforts are being made towards a fairer world. Some of the global development plans include Agenda 21, Earth summit (1992), Millennium Development Goals, Millennium summit (2000), World Summit on SDGs (2002), adoption of the 2030 agenda in January 2015, and United Nation summit (2015) that adopted the 17 SDGs.

Countries are required to implement these plans and, provide feedback on the progress as required. The recognition, based on performance has encouraged countries to make intentional moves on achieving the commitments made.

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Locally, Vision 2030 aims to propel Kenya toward being a middle-level income country. It envisions that by 2030, Kenyans will enjoy and access reliable factors of production at the micro and macro levels and that there will be a democracy where the rules of law, leadership, and integrity prevail.

But are we making progress towards a fairer society or, if you like, a fairer Kenya?

Allow me to recognize all the champions in the country who go beyond in ensuring we are aware of SDGs. These advocates ensure we are engaged to foster its implementation.

I also acknowledge the technocrats who ensure our developments are aligned towards addressing the SDGs. It is only when we all concert our efforts that we can address the 17 sustainable goals.

Personally, I would love to single out SDG 5:4 (unpaid care and domestic work). It is one of the challenging and sensitive goals to champion, as it addresses our social constructions that are difficult to discuss.

Imagine telling my father that he should be supporting my mum to do house chores, so that she can afford early sleep. Imagine me telling my religious leader they ought to allow women to take up leadership positions in the church.

How then should I make sense to a mama mboga that her voice matters in government planning? Or, how should I pitch for funding to combat social norms whose outcomes are intangible, invisible, and take longer to be realised?

These are among the key challenges that impede the realization of SDG 5.

Rather than blame individuals, we should all advance discussions on unpaid care. Sensitizing the community on cultural progressive practices will enable women to be in advantaged positions, participate in political spaces, and actualize their economic aspirations.

By recognizing that unpaid care work is an economic entity, we will be more interested in advancing its decency. We will reduce the time spend on it, and redistribute it at the household level. We will allow women to participate in decision-making processes.

How cool can it be if families go to bed early and women have enough time to engage in productive work?

For questions, write to Purity Jebor (purity.jebor@youthalivekenya.org).
MALE INVOLVEMENT AND PARTICIPATION IN CARE WORK: THE STORY OF JABULANI NCUBE

This is the story of Jabulani NCube. With his wife and three children, Jabulani lives in In Mhawu Village in Dayataya Ward under Chief Mafala. He is currently a village head.

I joined the WE-Care project in 2017 after I attended a community dialogue with traditional leaders, which was organised by Bethany Project, a WE-Care partner, in my village.

I was not supportive of all that the Bethany team was discussing on that day. I had no knowledge about the need to redistribute unpaid care work between men and women. I felt that care work is only meant to be done by women.

I was a strong believer of the gendered division of labour that my community assigns to every individual according to our culture tradition and even religious beliefs. I criticised that concept very much, could not even accept it.

I even discussed and influenced other men to shun the program because it was against our cultural and societal norms. I was very much opposed to the idea of sharing unpaid care work, such as washing, sweeping, and cooking.

After a series of workshops, I had a reflection on the whole idea of sharing care work. After a deep reflection, I also shared my new views with other village heads on the potential benefits being brought about by the project.

I started implementing the lessons learned from the workshops back in my home, and my wife was very appreciative. I committed myself that I will be sorely responsible for fetching firewood. So, every Sunday, I had the responsibility to cut and fetch firewood using my scotch-cart.

My wife also used to walk quite some distance to fetch water and she would spend hours fetching water. I had to address this problem through installing a piped water system at my home, which I managed to do very successfully. We now have access to tap water at home, and it is now easier for my family to undertake their day-to-day activities using this improved water source.

The only challenge that we are now faced with is the issue of a laundry infrastructure. We still go to the river to do our laundry and this exposes my family to possible physical assaults. I do not have any more financial resources to construct one.

However, I still have got a long way to go as far as unpaid care work is concerned.

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concerned. As much as I am sharing the domestic chores within my household, my wife does not want me to wash plates or cook at home, but I think she will adjust with time.

I have learned that unpaid care work uplifts the self-esteem of women and improves the health status of women in my community. I would also want to encourage other men out there to understand and see how important redistribution of unpaid care work is.

I also want to urge other men to adopt the idea of unpaid care work in their homes as this also addresses issues of violence, which are often sparked by the social expectation that women should do all the care work.

Men still need more engagement, particularly through community dialogues and door-to-door interactions by care champions. Some men are still clinging to harmful cultural norms, such as wife beating, while others justify the inequalities of care work through religious practices that trample upon the rights and dignity of women.

I appreciate what the Bethany Project is doing in partnership with Oxfam on engaging community members on unpaid care and domestic work. I want to recommend the Bethany/Oxfam to influence policy change at national level, so that unpaid care work can be managed by laws that all of us have to follow for successful development.

I also want to recommend Bethany to continue investing in time- and labour-saving equipment that will enable men to fully participate in unpaid care work. Issues of tsotso stoves or biogas should be popularised in every ward in Zvishavane district and Zimbabwe at large.

For questions, write to Regis Mtutu (RMtutu@oxfam.org.uk).

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FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE WOMEN’S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT KNOWLEDGE HUB AND WE-CARE’S UNPAID CARE LEARNING SERIES, WRITE TO MARY LEW ECHAVEZ AT MaEchavez@oxfam.org.uk.

Oxfam unveils new Policy and Practice website. Visit HERE.

CHECK OUT OXFAM’S CORONAVIRUS INFORMATION CENTER. It’s a space where you will find all you need to know about our response to the Coronavirus pandemic: daily updates, program guidance, alphabet of links, FAQ, and more.

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- Agriculture Specialist | APPLY HERE

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT WE-CARE STORIES:
Contact Vin Aranas at MAranas@oxfam.org.uk
The Women’s Economic Empowerment and Care (WE-Care) programme is a regional programme funded by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and by the Garden Trust Foundation.

For more information about WE-Care, visit our website at www.policy-practice.oxfam.org/we-care. You may also contact Mark Vincent Aranas at MAranas@oxfam.org.uk.