



Care and Education Cornerstones of sustainable and just economies

Report of the virtual MMM HLPF Side-Event 16 July 2020



Objectives of the side-event

- Spotlight the failings of our current economic system in recognising the essential role of care, especially unpaid care work
- Make the case for a paradigm shift in our economic thinking: spending on care and education must be seen as investments not expenses
- Call on governments to action: Covid-19 and its economic devastation offers a unique opportunity to “build back better” by prioritizing Care for wellbeing, sustainability and equity

See <https://makemothersmatter.org/care-and-education-cornerstones-of-sustainable-and-just-economies/> for additional background information and speakers’ short biographies.

Key takeaways

1. Like other commons, care is a collective concern and responsibility. It’s time to widen the discussion beyond academics and policymakers to include the general public, by translating the research and advocacy into ordinary language and make them as compelling as possible. The Covid-19 crisis provides us an opportunity, to wrap-up and be more proactive.

2. Care for children must be considered as an investment and the time spent on raising children by parents, families and community also factored-in. In particular, Early Childhood Development (ECD) strategies and services have the transformative power to reduce poverty, inequity and violence, and thus build a strong foundation for peace and security, resilience, social justice and cohesion. Supporting mothers/parents/families for ECD is a high returns investment and is more important than ever.
3. At the company level, promoting the wellbeing of people at work through simple policy and dialogue is also cost effective - it improves performance and also positively impacts life and health at home, especially for working mothers.
4. Moving beyond GDP and profits as drivers of our economies has become a necessity. Among the hundreds of alternate indicators or dashboards, a few are important and could be identified as interesting for an organisation like MMM to focus upon and try to influence so that care and education are part of a new economic system. However, Time-Use Surveys, which provide key data on care and wellbeing, remain a bottleneck.
5. The unequal distribution of unpaid care work is at the centre of the spirals of gender inequality. “Building back better” must prioritize care and education, i.e. social infrastructure over physical infrastructure. Investing in care is sustainable, generates jobs and reduces the gender employment gap. Care should be mainstreamed in all policy-making.
6. Care is at the heart of wellbeing. The governments of Iceland, New Zealand, Scotland and more recently Wales are showing us a way towards wellbeing economies, with new narratives and visions about how the economy can work to serve human and ecological wellbeing. Each country has developed its own framework for monitoring national progress in aligning economic policy with culture, value and wellbeing goals. These frameworks are the result of a participatory process to assess what matters to people.

Introduction by Anne-Claire de Liedekerke, President of Make Mothers Matter

- Care is essential for all human beings. We all rely on care at different points in our lives. But our current economic system completely ignores its value. Care and education subsidize our economies and they are considered endless and free resources.
- The pandemic has highlighted the importance of care. Paradoxically this crisis is giving us an opportunity to “build back better”.



“Building back better...” – A short video montage of testimonials from MMM grassroots member associations around the world¹ set the scene, sharing the lasting impact of the Covid-19 crisis in their lives and calling for changes.

Available on <https://youtu.be/mbcwQkKGrCo>

¹ MMM federates a network of about 40 grassroots organisations working in about 30 countries across the world to support and empower mothers and their families, and to advance the human rights of women and children – See <https://makemothersmatter.org/mmm-network/member-associations/>

Nancy Folbre, Feminist Economist, Professor emerita of Economics & Director, Program on Gender and Care Work, Political Economy Research Institute, University of Massachusetts Amherst²

“Not all inputs and outputs come with price tags attached. Somewhere along the way, babies are conceived, nurtured, educated, and launched into adulthood in a process that requires considerable time and effort as well as money”

Nancy Folbre, Valuing Children, 2010

- **Care is to be framed in the larger picture of the Commons – i.e. things that are unpriced, that are not sold on a market, but that are absolutely central to the functioning of the global economy.** This includes people, people’s capabilities, the ecological services we depend on, our stock of knowledge, our understanding of ourselves and each other. Both the policy-makers and the general public must understand the need to protect these global public goods.
- **The excessive focus on GDP is misguided: it is a relatively small component of a larger economic system that includes unpaid care work, unpriced assets and ecological services. It must be replaced by a broader set of indicators.**
- **Statistics on investments in children always focus on cash expenditures, not showing the value of time, parental time, maternal time, community time which is put into raising children.** The discussion on care should not be reduced to dollars: parenting is more than just another corporation – but there is a connection between the family economy and the larger economy.
- **Still, care is costly, and is very unfairly distributed: mothers clearly are paying a very unfair share of this cost – a fact that has been dramatized by the pandemic³.**
- **The cost of care is not only unfairly distributed between men and women, mothers and fathers, but also between parents and non-parents, between rich and poor, which in turn impacts poorer children’s future outcomes.**
- In conclusion: ***“We need to develop an interdisciplinary analysis of the problems that we are facing and we need to talk to the public and stop thinking of fellow academics and policy makers as our audience. We have to translate our arguments into ordinary language and make them as compelling as possible. And we need to wrap-up, we need to get tough and be more proactive”.***



10/28/2002—#52872

² <https://www.peri.umass.edu/economists/nancy-folbre>

see also Nancy Folbre’s blog, Care Talk, on <https://blogs.umass.edu/folbre/>

³ See the article of the NYT on the effects of the pandemic on mothers’ employment hours <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/15/parenting/working-moms-coronavirus.html>

**Rima Salah, Chair, Early Childhood Peace Consortium (ECPC)⁴
and co-editor of the book, “Pathways to peace: The
transformative power of children and families”⁵**

“Children and families can be
agents of change for peace”
ECPC Vision

- The pandemic is exacerbating existing crises, especially in the poorest countries. The last SDGs report shows that 71 million people are being pushed back into poverty, with women and children being the most affected. The collapse of health services increases maternal and child death, violence against women is on the rise, school closures keep millions of children out of school with no remote learning option - and many of them are girls, the future mothers, who will not be able to go back to school. Covid-19 is reversing years of progress and threatens the realization of the SDGs.
- Mothers/parents, have an important role to play to protect young children, especially during adversity, and to provide the nurturing care that they crucially need for their physical, socio-emotional and cognitive development to their full potential. Covid-19 has challenged this role: death, separation, loss of jobs, insecurity, psychosocial stress experienced by parents, especially mothers, undermines their ability to fulfill this important role.
- **Early Childhood Development (ECD) strategies and services have the transformative power to reduce poverty, inequity and violence, and thus build a strong foundation for peace and security, resilience, social justice and cohesion.**
- **Hence, ECD strategies and services are now more important than ever, to mitigate the immediate and long-term effects of the pandemic.**
- **Cost benefit analysis have consistently shown that investing in ECD is the most powerful investment a country can make, with societal returns of more than 13%⁶. In particular ECD programs have shown to markedly reduce governments expenditures in health, public aid, child protection and criminal justice⁷.**
- “Building back better” provides opportunities to shape innovative and transformative approaches and to place the interest of the people, families and communities at the heart of recovery efforts.
- **ECD programs and services must be understood as investments and prioritized in the global pandemic response and recovery.** They must be rooted in the *Nurturing care framework*⁸, that benefit the child, the mother, the family and the community. Those programs should be safe and protective, multi-sectorial and, most importantly, culturally sensitive.
- Children, women and families can be the driving force for change. The importance of parents must be recognized and Family Laws enacted and enforced to uphold their rights.

⁴ <https://ecdpeace.org/>

⁵ <https://ecdpeace.org/work-content/pathways-peace-overview>

⁶ <https://ecdpeace.org/work-content/economic-benefits-early-childhood-development-investments>

⁷ https://www.unicef.org/earlychildhood/index_69851.html

⁸ <https://nurturing-care.org/>

Valentina Urreiztieta, Psychologist, Empreintes Humaines⁹

- **Wellbeing at work and performance are very closely connected.**
- **Promoting psycho-social health and safety in the workplace and bringing life quality at work, also has a positive impact at home** – especially for working mothers. Time spent at work is a large part of the lives of employees and it has a direct impact on their private life and health.
- With the covid-19 crisis-induced lockdowns, the frontiers between work, home, family, and children disappeared. Women were especially impacted: increase of mental load, obligation to do multitasking, increase in childcare and tendency to feel guilty for not managing things as well as they want.
- **There are many simple and cost-effective actions/policies that companies can put in place to support a better balance between work and family life and the wellbeing of their employees – and that especially benefit mothers.** These include:
 - Flexible hours
 - Work organized by objectives rather than time schedules
 - Rules on meeting time: no meetings early in the morning, after 5PM or during lunch hours
 - Childcare on the company's site
 - Support with transportation
 - Safe spaces to discuss issues
 - Awareness raising among managers of challenges and risks of distress and burnout for parents juggling between work and family responsibilities.
- The workplace can promote a balance between professional aspiration and motherhood responsibilities. It is important for employees to feel understood by their employer – to feel recognized as humans – **the key is dialogue.**

Rutger Hoekstra, Founder, MetricsForTheFuture.com¹⁰ and author of “Replacing GDP by 2030: Towards a common language for the Well-being and Sustainability Community”

- So many areas of life are important but are not captured by GDP, like the environment, but also inequality and gender issues.
- It is important to bring together the communities working on care and education and *Beyond GDP* in order to strengthen the argument on moving away from GDP as the main driver of our economies and ensuring that alternate indicators factor in care and education.
- Hundreds of GDP alternative indicators or set of indicators have been proposed¹¹, a "cottage industry" which may explain why none has emerged so far to replace GDP.

“We at MMM want to make sure that the new system [that will replace GDP] includes care and education, not only as indicators, but as cornerstones.”

Anne-Claire de Liedekerke

⁹ <https://empreintehumaine.com/>

¹⁰ <http://metricsforthefuture.com/>

¹¹ These are described in Rutger Hoekstra's book *Replacing GDP by 2030* - <http://metricsforthefuture.com/press/>

- Among the hundreds of alternate indicators, a few are important and could be identified as interesting for an organisation like MMM to focus upon and try to influence:

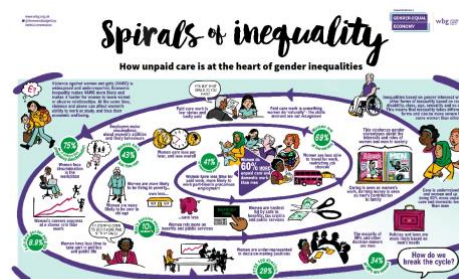
	Index	Dashboard
Conceptual	Economic Methodology Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI)	Economic Methodology Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Report (2009) Better Life Initiative (OECD)
	Psychological Methodology Subjective Wellbeing U-index	
Non-conceptual	SDG Index	Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)

- The **Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI)** is a readjusted GDP with additions that include household and volunteer work, and subtractions that reflect the costs of pollution, crime, family breakdown, underemployment and costs linked to the destruction of nature
Comparison with GDP shows that while GDP has continuously grown since the 50s, the GPI has flattened since the 70s, which indicates that human progress has stopped since the 70s
- The **SDGs** is a dashboard of indicators, which is non-conceptual since it is politically driven. Among the SDGs, Goal 5 on Gender Equality has a target, 5.4, which is specifically about unpaid care work, an indicator that could be targeted in SDG processes
- The **SDG Index, created by Jeffrey Sachs**, summaries SDGs
- The **OECD Better Life Index** results from the landmark **2009 Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi report**. It does quite a good job in measuring disparities and gender issues. The problem is that some data on which it is based are not measured frequently enough.

- Psychological methodologies are promising - one is the **U-index** by Kahneman and Krueger¹² who developed a system of *National Time-Use Accounting*. It shows the complexity of the notion of wellbeing and its relation with time-use.
- The urgency of the GDP issue is now clear - but the data is lagging behind. More time-use surveys (TUS) are needed. It would also help the *Beyond GDP* community.
- Unfortunately, TUS are expensive. One possibility could be to use big data, the irony being that while governments lack Time-Use data, companies like Google probably know what we are doing at any time of the day.

Susan Himmelweit, British feminist economist, Emeritus professor of economics at the Open University (UK) & coordinator of the Policy Advisory Group of the Women’s Budget Group¹³

- Looking at the interconnections between different gender inequalities, and the way they reinforce each other through feedback mechanisms, shows that the inequal distribution of unpaid care work is at the heart of all those inequalities. This is illustrated by the spiral diagram¹⁴. The question is how to break that cycle.



¹²https://inequality.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/media/media/pdf/Reference%20Media/Kahneman_2006_Measurement.pdf

¹³ The Women’s Budget Group, a feminist economic think tank, has been doing critiques of the UK government’s policies from a gender point of view. In 2019, the WBG launched the Commission on a Gender-Equal Economy with the aim of proactively developing alternative economic policies to promote a gender equal economy – see <https://wbg.org.uk/>

¹⁴ Additional info and video on <https://wbg.org.uk/analysis/spirals-of-inequality/>

- **We need a care-led recovery¹⁵** - Investment in health and social care must be part of the “Green New Deal” currently under discussion, which is mostly about investing in physical infrastructure/construction, as opposed to human beings and their care, education, social infrastructure.
- **Investing in care generates jobs and reduces the gender employment gap:** an analysis for different countries on the potential impact of investing 2% of GDP in care rather than construction shows that it creates a much greater number of jobs than a Green New Deal would. In addition, the gender balance is different as investing in care creates far more jobs for women.
- **Investing in care is also sustainable:** rather than producing more things, we all need to care for each other more and learn how to do so better.
- **Investing in care requires:**
 - a larger proportion of the population working in care
 - recognizing that successful care depends on the skills of the caregiver
 - transforming the job of care (training, better pay, career prospect, etc) in order to ensure recruitment and retention of carers

It is necessary to improve the lives of all women, including unpaid carers.
- One of the positive sides of the pandemic is that people have actually seen care upfront. It has shown men and women, but also their employers, that care is a responsibility that concerns us all and cannot be ignored. It is time to talk about **a collective responsibility for care.**
- **All policy decisions should be “care-proofed”, in other words their implications on care must be assessed: on how care is given, how it is received and how it impacts its quality.**

Amanda Janoo, Knowledge & Policy Lead, Wellbeing Economy Alliance (WEAll)¹⁶

- **Progress relies on aligning economic policy with culture, value and wellbeing goals.**
- For the development community, GDP growth has been the only legitimate goal... whereas in a country like Mozambique people understand the **value of time** over material possessions, and the true value of money as a means to answer the needs of their family and community, not an end.
- Who is a policymaker matters a lot – having women involved in economic policy makes a big difference: they are more aware of the fact that the economy is just a way to provide for one another, and that care work is a huge part of it.
- In order to move beyond GDP and our narrow understanding of value in our economy, **we need truly participatory processes to engage people on what really matters to them and for collective wellbeing now and for the generations to come.**

“The Wellbeing Economy Alliance believes that humanity should determine economics, not the other way around. In the same way at MMM we believe that mothers have to take part in determining the decisions that affect their lives and that of their children”

Anne-Claire de Liedekerke

¹⁵ See the Commission’s report on <https://wbg.org.uk/analysis/reports/a-care-led-recovery-from-coronavirus/>

¹⁶ <https://wellbeingeconomy.org/>

- This is the aim of the Wellbeing Economy Alliance (WEAll), which brings together academics, activists, organisations and policymakers, to move beyond critiques of our current economic system, to construct **new narratives and visions about how the economy can work to serve human and ecological wellbeing**. It is important to understand that we have the power to transform our economy.
- The Wellbeing Economy Government Partnership is composed of the governments of Iceland, New Zealand and Scotland, and was recently joined by Wales. More States are keen to join soon. These countries are committed to moving beyond GDP as a measure of progress and to sharing policy best practices as they strive to build economies that prioritize people and the planet.
- Each of these countries has developed its **own framework for monitoring national progress in areas such as wellbeing, dignity, compassion – and each has its own set of socio-economic and environmental indicators**.
- The **participatory process** for developing these frameworks is also important: E.g. Scotland established street stalls and consultation meetings to identify the 11 national outcomes that were considered the most important for their society. When developing its wellbeing budget – the first of its kind in the world – the New Zealand government sent representatives across the countries to meet people to assess their priorities.
- **It is only the beginning of the journey**, as these government are still trying to figure out how to align their vision with their economic system. **But what seemed impossible is increasingly seen as necessary**. The Covid-19 crisis has exposed how immensely important caregiving is for our society and provides an opportunity for us to reevaluate what really matters to us.
- We are already seeing progress, e.g.:
 - Iceland has instituted 9 months of **parental leave**, with parents being required to split the time equally so that children spend equal amounts of time with their parents and workloads are better distributed
 - New Zealand is promoting a **reduced workweek** so that people have more time to connect, care and engage in other activities - like tourism - to rebuild this industry¹⁷.
- **What matters to us cannot always be financially measured** (e.g. love). In a wellbeing economy, we do not need to monetize care/reproductive work for it to be deemed valuable. Our understanding of its value should be determined by its contribution to our wellbeing goals.

Summation: Duncan Fisher, campaigner for child wellbeing and wellbeing,

- Care is at the center of Gender Equality. Care is also at the very heart of a wellbeing economy.
- These 2 agendas are starting to come together: the UK Commission on Gender Equal Economy has adopted the wellbeing narrative. As care is becoming more and more recognized and valued, wellbeing must also become a mainstream narrative.

¹⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/20/jacinda-ardern-flags-four-day-working-week-as-way-to-rebuild-new-zealand-after-covid-19>

Selection of comments from participants

- Having been a part of this Movement since 1972, I still see women talking among themselves. We need not just to include men but train the boys and youths who should take a proactive role to stand for Mothers and also those good husbands and fathers should stand up for Mothers Matters. It will depend our Education System and more parenting. Having worked with rural women for 35 years have witnessed many positive changes with this approach (Janak Plata McGilligan, India)
- A lot of media in England focuses on the idea that we are regressing back to the 1950s with the mother at home, chained to household 'chores', bearing the brunt of caring for the children. It is often reported about how desperate mothers are to go back to work. It has been an extraordinary time and mothers at home have had homeschooling on top of paid work and household work, it is not really an accurate picture of the 1950s. In fact in the 1950s at least mothers were able to be at home and most families could survive on one income which is almost impossible now. Without reigniting mummy wars how do we talk about the initial feelings of slowing down from the 'rat race' and being able to enjoy time with the family and recognise the positive work that goes on at home which should be celebrated so that mothers do not feel they have to get back to the workplace as fast as possible to save sanity? How can we erode the idea that we are 'inactive economic units'. Can we change the way we measure growth to the economy? (Anne Fennel, MAHM, UK)
- UN Women has published a Policy Brief on Covid-19 and the Care Economy - <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/06/policy-brief-covid-19-and-the-care-economy> (Sylvia Hordosch, UN Women, USA)
- As part of any measure the care economy, could we consider and measure the impact of breastfeeding or providing breastmilk. This takes parents' time and produces a good, as well as increasing health (thus reducing healthcare costs). (Lisa Mandel, ILCA, USA)
- At Danone Italy we launched a Parental Policy in 2011 that has become the Global Parental Policy in Danone. Here in Italy in 9 years it has produced amazing results from human, social and economic standpoint. (Sonia Malaspina, Danone, Italy)

Next steps - selection of (unanswered) questions to continue the conversation

- As we focus on women's empowerment / skills and knowledge acquisition and support services, how do we ensure that men as part of family functioning become key role players in a pro-family approach - where men are part of family economy, family care and family education?
- In South Africa more than 50% of children do not live with their biological fathers, teenage pregnancy is high, unwanted births and baby abandonment increasing, we have more absent fathers, more domestic violence and more men incarcerated. How do we grow men as partners in the journey toward making mothers matter?
- How to grow care economies in poor and developing nations where budget for care is/might be non-existent?

- A handful of advanced countries are moving towards wellbeing economy - but what would this mean for developing countries or war affected countries?
- How can we convince other governments to join the Wellbeing Economy Alliance and move towards wellbeing economies?
- Today we tend to measure value with a financial estimate, or at least with figures, numbers. But how to measure the true value of care?
- What are the essential policy changes and tangible actions which have the highest priorities at this time, and how can we leverage this time to really push for change?
- Could a Universal Basic Income support care and women's rights?

About Make Mother Matter - MMM

Make Mothers Matter (MMM) is an international NGO created in 1947 to raise the awareness of policy makers and public opinion on the contribution of mothers to social, cultural and economic development. MMM has no political or religious affiliations, and thus transparently voices the concerns of mothers at international level with permanent MMM representatives at the United Nations (General Consultative Status), UNESCO and the European Union.

MMM federates a network of about 40 grassroots organisations working in about 30 countries across the world to support and empower mothers and their families, and to advance the human rights of women and children.