WBG Commission on a Gender-Equal Economy calls for a Care-led Recovery

Make Mothers Matter
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WBG Commission on a Gender-Equal Economy

• Women’s Budget Group, a feminist economic think-tank:
  • known for its critical gender impact analysis of existing and proposed UK policy

• Commission on a Gender-Equal Economy
  • proactively developing alternative economic policies to promote a gender equal economy
  • Commissioners from other organisations, trade unions, academia, business, and journalism
    • Chair: Professor Diane Elson
  • Has commissioned papers and asked or evidence on a number of themes from experts in different sectors, including experts by experience

• Examines interconnection between different gender inequalities

• Focuses on the interconnections and feedback mechanisms that reinforce inequalities
  • and the links that policy can help break

• Sees the unequal division of unpaid care at their heart
Spirals of inequality

How unpaid care is at the heart of gender inequalities

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is widespread and under-reported. Economic inequality makes VAWG more likely and makes it harder for women to leave violent or abusive relationships. At the same time, violence and abuse can affect women's ability to work or study, and thus their economic well-being.

75% of women face discrimination in the workplace.

Women earn less per hour, and less overall.

43% of women are less likely to be living in poverty...

60% more women work in unpaid care and domestic work than men.

Women have less time for paid work, more likely to work part-time in precarious employment.

Women are more likely to be in precarious employment.

Women are more likely to be poor in old age.

Women are more likely to be living in poverty...

41% of women are less likely to work part-time in precarious employment.

Women are less able to travel for work, restricting job choices.

Women are less well off.

Women are hardest hit by cuts to benefits, tax credits, and public services.

Women are under-represented in decision-making positions.

The majority of MPs and other decision makers are men.

Policies and laws are more likely based on men's needs.

How do we break the cycle?
We need a care-led recovery!

• Commission set up before the pandemic
  • But answer to what was needed to build back better more gender economy fell out easily from our analysis

• A care-led recovery by investing in care to generate jobs and reduce gender inequality

• Like a green new deal – not a competitor but a complement to it
  • But investing in human beings and their care, our care infrastructure, rather than physical structure
Effect on employment rate of investing 2% of GDP on construction or care: various EU countries
But isn’t that just producing poor quality jobs for women?

- Investing in care requires:
  - a larger proportion of the population involved in providing care
  - recognising that successful care depends on the skill of carers
  - transforming the job of care - training, career structure, better pay
    - recruitment and retention problems in many countries make this necessary if care workforce is to expand

- In Sweden:
  - 10% of the workforce is employed in care
  - Care workers not as badly paid as in the other countries
  - 4.8% of GDP is spent on care

- NB Even in Sweden most care carried out unpaid within families

- Investment in care is necessary to improve the lives of all women – including unpaid carers
Rise in overall employment rate (% points) from matching Sweden: in % of GDP spent on care and wages in care as % of average wage
A care-led recovery would:

• Transform care services for those who need them
• Generate significant employment (more than investment in construction)
• Reduce the gender employment gap (unlike investment in construction) but still create a lot of jobs for men
• Be an investment in the future:
  • Better cared for people
  • Preventing greater needs in the future
• Be sustainable – rather than producing more things, we will all need to be caring for each other more and learning how to do so better!