



# Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing

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## Institutional Mapping of Child Care Actors

Debbie Budlender

# WIEGO Resource Documents

WIEGO resource documents include WIEGO generated literature reviews, annotated bibliographies, and papers reflecting the findings from new empirical work. They provide detail to support advocacy, policy or research on specific issues.

## About the WIEGO Child Care Initiative

WIEGO's Child Care Initiative (CCI) seeks to shift child care from the periphery of global social policy to the centre, so that it is seen as a core set of social services and as a core part of social security. The major concern for WIEGO within the wider debate on child care provision is the relationship between child care provision and the ability of women, particularly poorer women, to engage in income-earning work and to improve their economic position. Learn more at [wiego.org/wiego/child-care-initiative](http://wiego.org/wiego/child-care-initiative).

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## 1. Background

This paper is one of several produced in the first phase of the Child Care Initiative (CCI) of the Social Protection Programme of Women in the Informal Economy: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO). The CCI aims to explore the feasibility of a global campaign to integrate child care, conceptually and in policy terms, as a core component of social protection and to make the link with work, including informal work, explicit.

This paper aims to identify key actors who might be influential in the field of child care. It aims, in particular, to explore their positions in respect of child care in relation to women in informal employment. The focus on women reflects the facts that women are, in general, more likely than men to be in informal employment, and that women – around the globe – do the bulk of paid and unpaid caring for children both in the home and elsewhere.

The paper is based primarily on a literature review, which included a review of relevant websites. The paper must be read against the background of the general literature review on child care and informal employment produced as part of the same project.

After a short introduction, the paper presents evidence on the position of each actor. The actors are presented in categories, with individual actors described alphabetically within each category.

### Terminology

Much of the relevant literature on child care is framed in terms of early childhood development (ECD) or early childhood care and development (ECCD) or early childhood care and education (ECCE). Internationally, the norm is to see this concept as covering children up to the age of 8 years, sometimes from as far back as the time of conception. The term is understood broadly to encompass all aspects relevant for child growth and development, including health, nutrition, education, and care among others. The literature stresses that ECD must be “integrated” and requires inter-sectoral collaboration. The term is thus, in theory, wider than the focus of this paper. However, the terms above are also often used more narrowly to refer to provision of care services for young children under schoolgoing age and ECD initiatives often focus on provision of such services. Such services are of direct relevance for our purposes, as are the much less discussed and offered services that provide after-care for children in school. Alongside provision of services, the ECD focus often encompasses initiatives such as “parenting education” in respect of parents so as to build their capacity to provide better care for children. These initiatives are also of interest for our purposes in terms of whether and how they affect women informal workers. However, while parenting initiatives are relatively common, the details are rarely provided in the literature reviewed.

### Changes in Understanding of ECD Over Time

Pence and Nsamenang (2008) provide a useful summary of how the understanding of ECD has changed over time. They trace back increased recognition of the importance of the early years of childhood to the Jomtien Conference on Education for All and the World Summit for Children of

1990, accompanied by widespread ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) of 1989.

They note that a 1996 World Bank publication, *Early Child Development: Investing in the Future* emphasised the importance of brain development. This publication coincided with the World Bank's approval of a series of loans for ECD in different parts of the developing world. At the same time, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) was placing increasing emphasis on the importance of "integrated ECD" (IECD) as a central component of its activities. Several international donors chose ECD as a primary focus at this time with at least one, the Bernard van Leer Foundation, having already chosen this focus many years earlier. At the 2000 follow-up conference to Jomtien, held in Dakar in 2000, participants committed to "expanding and improving early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children."

Pence and Nsameng comment on how the emphasis on brain development was developed into a "potent message" as to how ECD could contribute to economic development. They comment that, as a result, "the most powerful proponents of ECD are not parents, care providers/teachers, or child development specialists – but economists." They cite, in particular, the influence of the work of Nobel laureate James Heckman, and note that the expert panel of nine economists put together by the Copenhagen Consensus Center and the Inter-American Development Bank in 2007 ranked ECD as the first of 40 potential solutions to development problems in Latin America.

The argument that ECD is important because of how it can contribute to economic growth is clearly instrumentalist. Child advocates may argue that ECD is a right, rather than something that one should ensure so as to achieve other goals. However, the child advocates use the economic arguments supported by the World Bank and economists more generally to bolster their cause.

One challenge of the emphasis on brain development is a potential emphasis on "education" and relative neglect of "care". This can be accompanied by an emphasis on the later preschool years and relative neglect of the early years. Meanwhile, it is in the earliest years that care is most intensive and more expensive. It is thus in the earliest years that women who (want to) engage in economic activity most need assistance with child care.

An emphasis on brain development also brings with it an emphasis on the need to stimulate children. This can go alongside a perceived need for parenting education – particularly for poor parents who are perceived as having a deficit in terms of education, knowledge and skills. The challenge here is the additional demands that may be placed on the time of women who (want to) engage in economic activity, with the demands being both in respect of time spent attending parenting education and in terms of time they are expected to devote to stimulating their children.

## 2. Key Actors

As noted above, the discussion of actors is arranged according to broad categories, with individual actors arranged alphabetically within these categories.

### International Agencies

#### **Commission on the Status of Women**

Bedford's (2010) review of the outcomes of the 2009 meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) of the United Nations Economic and Social Council provides useful insight into recent developments as to how care is conceptualized by key actors. The annual CSW event is organized by representatives of five regional groups of member states, and participants include non-government actors alongside government representatives. The theme of the 2009 CSW event was "The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including care-giving in the context of HIV/AIDS". Bedford's review is based on interviews with participants and reading of official documents, included the Agreed Conclusions. The latter, which constitute the main document produced by each CSW annual event, are tabled for adoption as resolutions of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). If adopted, they do not have the weight of conventions, but have some authority as a form of "soft law".

Bedford describes how the 2009 CSW event succeeded in achieving consensus among a wide range of actors on the importance of care, government responsibility for care, and the importance of caregivers' participation in debates on the topic. The event brought together three themes that had up until then been discussed fairly separately in United Nations (UN) circles. The themes were equal sharing of responsibility, care, and HIV and AIDS. It seems likely that some actors might have agreed to the three points on the basis that the care was related to HIV, with their interest in carers focusing on care provided by people from outside the family (for example, by community caregivers) rather than on caring done on an unpaid basis within the family. However, Bedford felt that the consensus reflected emerging recognition of the importance of economic justice in discussions on gender equality, as well as of the limitations of a crude free-market approach to growth and provision of services.

Bedford notes that the unequal division of care work had already been identified as an obstacle to women's participation in economic as well as other activities in the Beijing Platform for Action of 1995, and was also discussed in the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development and the 1995 World Summit for Social Development. The CSW discussed the issue in 1996 and produced agreed conclusions on "Child and dependent care, including sharing of work and family responsibilities."

Bedford spends some time discussing the reasons why more conservative actors, and in particular conservative Christians, were part of the 2009 CSW consensus. She argues that actors such as the international non-governmental organization (NGO) Mothers' Union were able to reconcile their beliefs in marriage and family life. For example, the call for equal sharing of responsibilities within families meshed with the objectives of their Worldwide Parenting Programme. Meanwhile, the emphasis

on HIV and AIDS, and the substantial additional care burden imposed by the epidemic, facilitated recognition that families could not be expected to bear the burden alone.

Among the agreed conclusions, those most relevant for our purposes were the statements that government should:

- “design, implement and promote family-friendly policies and services, including affordable, accessible and quality care services for children and other dependents, parental and other leave schemes and campaigns to sensitize public opinion on equal sharing of employment and family responsibilities between women and men;...
- ensure that social protection measures such as health insurance and child and family allowances are widely available and accessible, that workers are not discriminated against when they avail themselves of these benefits, and that these benefits target all workers, including, as appropriate, in the informal sector;
- develop and improve sustainable and adequate social protection and/or insurance schemes, including pension and savings schemes, and recognize leave periods for care-giving in the calculation of benefits...”

Alongside the advances, there were some limitations. These included the message that the ideal in terms of care and development was, in Bedford’s word, a “privatized nuclear family consisting of a male-female partnership, sharing care and paid work in an egalitarian way... albeit supported with stronger state services...” (Bedford, 2010: 22). References to diverse family forms that were included in the document prepared by the Expert Group Meeting held before the event did not make it through to the agreed conclusions. This omission happened despite the discussions on the role played by extended families, grandparents, and female-headed households in the face of the HIV and AIDS epidemic. Further, Bedford observes that many actors saw the high prevalence of female-headed households in Latin America as a problem rather than as one of many family forms whose needs should be met.

Addati and Cassirer’s (2008) report was commissioned by the Economic Commission for Europe as background for the CSW. The comprehensive report includes the observation that many women in developing countries land in vulnerable and informal employment because of their family responsibilities. The authors cite evidence from Latin America, Philippines, Bangladesh, and Angola to back up this statement. They also usefully question the assumption that all working women can rely on non-working (women) kin, including grandmothers, to provide care. They observe that increased urbanization and migration as well as changing family forms and increased pressure for all adults to seek work mean that this is not an option for many working women. They describe how low earnings and child care responsibilities feed on each other, and are accompanied by lesser social protection and often increased exposure to hazards for women as well as their children.

Addati and Cassirer claim that close on half of all countries do not have formal programmes for children under 3 years of age, and those for older pre-school children generally have incomplete coverage, particularly in respect to poorer and rural communities. Where programmes exist, they often are designed in ways that are not convenient for working women. For example, they cover only a few hours a day. Further, in almost all countries at least some of the care – and often all of it – is provided

through the private sector. This excludes poor families, including those dependent on informal work, that do not have the means to pay unless there are other providers, such as faith-based ones, which provide free or cheap services. In many countries, the government's role is confined to trying to control quality, at the most. Government funding is especially unusual in respect to younger children. This can be seen as reflecting lesser government interest in care, and increasing interest as the element of "education" becomes more important, and thus the supposed link with economic growth.

Similarly, hours for school-going children often do not match the working day. Those who have the means may employ domestic workers to care for their children. Poorer women may require that their older (girl) children do the care work (disrupting their education) or, instead, the women may take the children to work with them. The authors cite evidence in respect of the last option from Indonesia, Kenya, Vietnam, Botswana – showing, among others, a greater tendency for this solution among informal workers and agricultural workers.

Unfortunately, most of the examples given by Addati and Cassirer (2008) of good practice and policy relate to formal employees, and would thus not be applicable for many informal workers. However, an extended box describes how the 1988 Constitution of Brazil guarantees pre-school care for all children under the age of six years, and how the country has tried to achieve this through a range of different approaches, including public preschools funded and managed by government and community pre-schools which received support from NGOs as well as government. In Guatemala, the government funds child care through Community Daycare Centres, but these are confined to poorer urban areas.

## **European Union**

Hein and Cassirer (2010) note that the European Union (EU) recognizes child care as a key obstacle to achieving full employment and, in particular, to women's participation in the labour market. At the Barcelona summit in 2002, EU governments set targets of achieving 33 per cent coverage for children under 3 and 90 per cent coverage for children between 3 years and compulsory school age by 2010. Eurofound (2011) notes that few member states met these targets.

As noted, the Addati and Cassirer paper was commissioned by the Economic Commission for Europe. A statement on behalf of the EU submitted to the CSW by Michael Kocáb, the Czechoslovak Minister for Human Rights and Minorities, clearly emphasised "child and dependent care" as a key element in terms of sharing of responsibilities. In addition to family leave and appropriate working and opening hours, he called for "adequate and accessible care services for children and elders", making clear the link to gender equality. He said further that EU member states were assessing whether their legal frameworks provided for "equal treatment" of self-employed people and their "assisting spouses" in these respects. He referred to the Council of European Union's 2007 "Conclusions on balanced roles of women and men for jobs, growth and social cohesion".

## **International Labour Organization**

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has engaged on the issue of child care as it relates to women's employment primarily, but not only, through its interest in "work-life" balance. (Fagan *et al.*



(2001) question this term given that work is part of life for most individuals.) The work-life balance discussions and evidence focus primarily on formal sector work. In particular, they focus on the rights of employees in the workplace. Some of the ILO publications do, however, refer to the particular challenges that occur in relation to informal workers. The issue of work-life has also come up in the ILO's relatively recent work around domestic workers, both in terms of the child care work that these workers do as part of their employment, and in terms of what these workers do in respect of care of their own children.

Addati and Cassirer (2008) date ILO's recognition of such issues to as far back as the first session of the International Labour Conference in 1919, which adopted the Maternity Protection Convention (No. 3 of 1919). In 1965, a Recommendation on Women with Family Responsibilities followed. This recommendation was, however, problematic to the extent that it suggested that women had lesser commitment than men to work because of their family responsibilities.

In 1981, the 1965 recommendation was replaced by the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156), and the Workers with Family Responsibilities Recommendation, 1981 (No. 165). Convention 156, which has been ratified by (only) 40 countries, reads as follows:

*With a view to creating effective equality of opportunity and treatment for men and women workers, each Member [State] shall make it an aim of national policy to enable persons with family responsibilities who are engaged or wish to engage in employment to exercise their right to do so without being subject to discrimination and, to the extent possible, without conflict between their employment and family responsibilities.*

The Convention states further that “[a]ll measures compatible with national conditions and possibilities shall further be taken... to develop or promote community services, public or private, such as child-care and family services and facilities.” This clause opens the way for community-based services that could meet the needs of informal workers. However, Addati and Cassirer (2008) suggest that in many developing countries those with traditional views will oppose the notion that government, rather than family and perhaps domestic workers, has a role to play in child care.

The ILO Maternity Convention, no 183 of 2000, provides for 14 weeks of maternity leave, with pay of at least two-thirds of the previous earnings. Article 2 states that the convention applies to “all employed women, including those in atypical forms of dependent work”. It is not clear if this excludes those not in dependent work, such as the self-employed. The convention also allows for ratifying states to exclude particular categories of dependent workers if organized employers and workers agree to this. Only 24 countries have ratified this Convention, although some which have not ratified provide the required protection. Overall, then, the Convention is currently of limited benefit in respect of the child care needs of informal workers. The 2012 UNICEF/ILO publication notes that lack of maternity and paternity leave and protection for informal workers “continues to be a daunting challenge for working families in that sector” (UNICEF and ILO, 2012: 58). It suggests that cash grants would help to address the challenge. However, where cash grants are given for children, this would not help at the time babies are born. Further, cash grants are generally not sufficient to cover child care needs.

Addati and Cassirer (2008) note that ILO Maternity Protection Conventions state that payment during maternity leave should come from social security or public funding. This form of funding provides for an employer contribution. Theoretically, social security or public funding could allow for informal workers, including the self-employed, to be covered. In practice, this is not often done because, among other reasons, there is no employer to contribute.

Work-life balance forms part of the ILO's Decent Work agenda, where it is framed as "combining work, family and personal life". This area is, however, one in which there have been great challenges in coming up with quantitative indicators which are readily available across countries. The legal indicators relate to maternity, paternity, and parental leave. Generally these leaves are entitlements available only to formal employees. Further, they generally cover only the first days of a child's life and are therefore of limited utility in meeting child care needs.

The ILO is a leading player in the area of social protection. It has, in particular, developed the notion of the social protection floor. The floor includes maternity care as well as income security related to maternity. It also provides for "basic income security for children, providing access to nutrition, education, care and any other necessary goods and services". It thus provides an opening for a claim to child care.

A publication commissioned by the ILO on workplace solutions for child care (Hein and Cassirer, 2010) focuses primarily on formal sector arrangements for employees. It does, however, include some references to the situation of informal workers and, within formal workplaces, pays special attention to provisions for lower-earning workers who are less able to pay for child care themselves. The publication notes that informal employment, whether through self-employment or employment in small informal businesses, is especially common in developing countries, and that the problems facing these workers in respect to child care are "even more acute" than those facing workers in the workplaces covered in the publication (Hein and Cassirer, 2010: 13).

The case studies in the book include a few where the child care provisions provided by formal workplaces are also open to informal workers. For example, the Early Childhood Centre in the Phra Pradaeng Industrial Zone in Thailand serves employees of the medium and large companies in the zone, but also provides for street vendors whose earnings are at around the minimum wage level. The centre is managed by the Metal and Steel Workers Union of Thailand and has hours suitable for working parents. The centre is funded primarily through fees paid by parents, but it also receives food and milk subsidies from government and an annual donation from the Community Savings Group which shares the same building.

In Thailand's Nawanakhon industrial area the Network of Nawanakhon Labour Unions established a daycare centre to cater to the large number of workers in the area who sent their children to rural areas to be raised by grandparents. About 80 per cent of the parents of the children served by the centre are minimum wage earners in the formal establishments, while the remainder are children of vendors. The centre is close to where workers live within the industrial area, but has a high turnover of children as parents continue to send their children to rural areas. It is mainly dependent on fees paid by parents, but receives a milk subsidy from the municipality and teaching equipment from the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security. Both Phra Pradaeng and Nawanakhon centres

obtained interest-free loans from the AFL-CIO to set up the centres, and Phra Pradeng also obtained assistance from Terre des Hommes during the initial set-up phase.

Medley, a pharmaceutical company in Brazil, in 1999 established a daycare facility for its employees in its Campinas and Sumaré plants. Approximately 30 per cent of the 150 places are reserved for children whose low-income parents are not employees of Medley but live in the area. Medley covers all the costs of the centre.

In Kenya, the export-oriented Red Lands Roses company obtained funding from a German development bank to set up a child care centre for the plantation's employees.

Beyond individual workplaces, the publication (Hein and Cassirer, 2010) points to good practice examples, namely, Colombia's Hogares Comunitarios programme, which provides care for more than a million poor children under age 6; the Integrated Child Development Services programme in India, which provides care for children in rural and tribal areas and urban slums; and Portugal's legislation of 2006, which requires that all primary schools organize after-school activities between 3 and 5.30 pm.

The publication notes that there are two categories of workplace-based measures that can help parents manage their child care responsibilities. Firstly, there are measures related to working conditions that assist parents in caring for their children themselves. Secondly, there are measures which help access care provided by others. The publication focuses on the latter.

The publication notes the limitations of publicly-provided services. These include a focus on the immediate pre-school years, minimal provision of after-care for school-going children, and inadequate places in public facilities. Options are especially limited for parents with atypical working hours who are often forced to rely on home-based care. Often the focus is more on the health, nutrition, education, and safety needs of children than of the needs of working parents.

Finally, the publication notes the tensions between the needs of working parents for affordable child care and the need for adequate funds to pay child care workers decent wages.

A later publication commissioned by the ILO explores international evidence on how working time arrangements affect work-life balance (Fagan *et al.*, 2011). The report acknowledges at the outset that most of the research on which it draws was done in western developed countries. The authors thus made a special effort to find studies in Japan and Latin America. The focus was on workers in the formal economy, but all of the limited evidence found in respect of the informal economy is included in the report.

The authors note that more than half of all employed women in Latin America and the Caribbean are in informal employment, where they generally work long and irregular hours with no social protection. Often they are confined to these jobs because of their family responsibilities as the jobs allow them to work nearer to home, be more flexible about work hours, and take children with them to work. In addition, some parents in the formal economy may work atypical hours so that they can arrange care shifts with others in their families. They cite evidence presented in ILO reports to the effect that more than seven million children in India are thought to accompany their (mainly female) parents to work on building sites, while in Guatemala a substantial proportion of women informal workers (presumably in a particular study) are in these jobs because of their domestic responsibilities.

The authors note that work-life balance is affected by “social infrastructure” alongside the characteristics (such as hours of work or entitlement to leave) of a particular job. Such social infrastructure includes affordable, good quality child care alongside other aspects such as affordable transport.

The report on the ILO discussion on work-life balance from its 312th session in 2011 (ILO, 2011) notes that the increased interest in work-life balance arises from the increase in women’s participation in paid work, the expansion of non-standard work, ageing of the population, and changes in family patterns, including the increase in single-parenting. These developments have been exacerbated by the global financial and economic crisis and related cutbacks to social services. The report observes that the fact that the UN found leave policies and infrastructure for child and other care to be necessary for attainment of the MDG goals of poverty reduction, gender equality, child mortality, maternal health, and HIV and AIDS contradicts the assumption that work-life balance is irrelevant for developing countries and for those working in the informal economy.

The report suggests that the lack of adequate state- and workplace-provided support programmes, such as child care, results in coping strategies that include having fewer children, relying on (generally low-paid) domestic workers, using older children to care for younger ones, leaving children without care, or taking them to the workplace. It postulates that these, in turn, can have the negative results of a reduction in school attendance, an increase in child labour and in anti-social behaviour in youth. It reports initiatives across both middle- and high-income countries to address the needs of working parents but notes that these are often only available to employees in large companies.

It cites as a good practice India’s Unorganized Workers (Social Security) Act 2008, which entitles informal employees to maternity benefits, among other benefits. Similarly, a European Union directive of 2010 requires that member states ensure that self-employed and unpaid family women workers receive maternity benefits for at least 14 weeks. The report does not state to what extent these measures are implemented.

The report claims that the “development of affordable and reliable childcare services is among the most cost-effective measures to promote integrated social protection to vulnerable groups” (ILO, 2011: 17) in that such services increase the social and economic security of the beneficiary families and promote child health and development. It cites Chile’s “Chile Crece Contigo” programme, which aims to provide free child care for the poorest 40 per cent of the population, and also cites Mexico’s *Estancias Infantiles para Apoyar a Madres Trabajadoras*, which provides access to child care for working mothers and India’s ICDS.

## **Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development**

An ILO-commissioned publication cites a report of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) which suggests that lack of child care support impedes labour force participation and that this, in turn, results in “higher welfare expenditure, lost tax revenues, inhibited growth and wasted human capital” (cited at Hein and Cassirer, 2010: 9). This implies an instrumentalist economic-focused approach to child care. The publication states that the OECD disfavours a demand-side approach of providing parental subsidies (rather than a supply-side approach of supporting providers) as it sees the former as weakening the government’s control over quality and encouraging poor quality daycare rather than professional centres.

Daly and Lewis's (2000) article, which is now more than a decade old, describes and characterizes the approach to care in different European states. It usefully distinguishes between care for children and care for the elderly. Unfortunately, it does not distinguish between the needs and situation of formal and informal workers.

The authors characterize Scandinavian countries as having a “collectivization” approach to both groups, with more than half of all pre-school children attending publicly-controlled care services. Other European countries favour privatization rather than collectivization but do so in different ways. In Mediterranean countries, care is generally privatized to the family, and in Germany, to voluntary service providers. In France, child care is collectivized but elder care is not. In Britain and Ireland, in contrast, child care is a “state-free zone”.

Daly and Lewis note that when market principles are applied to public sector care services, governments tend to target those most in need, with less – if any – attention to the needs of groups such as unemployed parents. Care then becomes less of a right, with more discretion on the part of government and professionals as to who has access. The move away from a rights-based approach is accompanied by an emphasis on the obligations of parents, including the obligation to do paid work. In the case of single mothers, the care responsibilities alongside obligations to do paid work result in what they describe as “complicated” developments that “have thrown up strange alliances” (Daly and Lewis, 2000: 295). However, they observe that across Europe child care is more likely than elderly care to be subsidized by government.

Daly and Lewis observe that all countries experience pressure because women are not as available for care work as they were in the past due to, among other reasons, a greater labour market engagement. They note that while early welfare state measures arose from concerns about waged labour, the concern was with the impact on male labour.

Subsequently, gender (and women) became a concern both out of explicit concern about gender equality and because of the increasing participation of women in the paid labour market.

## **United Nations Children's Fund**

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has taken a strong interest in ECD for many years. For the most part, UNICEF's advocacy focuses, understandably, on the benefits to children. However, a report summarizing results from the UNICEF-supported Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (UNICEF, 2012) notes that good quality ECCE benefits mothers and other caregivers by freeing up their time for educational and work activities, alongside the benefit it brings for children. However, the surveys find that in a third of the countries with data less than one in ten children aged 3-4 years attends any form of “organized early learning”.

Article 18 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which has been ratified by 191 countries (all except Somalia and the United States (Folbre, 2008: 140), reads as follows:

*2. For the purpose of guaranteeing and promoting the rights set forth in the present Convention, States Parties shall render appropriate assistance to parents and legal guardians in the performance of their child-rearing responsibilities and shall ensure the development of institutions, facilities and services for the care of children.*

*3. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that children of working parents have the right to benefit from child-care services and facilities for which they are eligible.*

These clauses acknowledge the issue of working parents, but (somewhat strangely) require only that children benefit from services for which parents (or children?) are eligible, rather than that the eligibility of parents (and children) is ensured.

The report on a recent evaluation (UNICEF, 2011) provides useful insights into the work that has been supported by UNICEF in the area of ECD. The evaluation drew on a desk-based analysis of data from ten countries and case studies of ECD programmes in Cambodia, Ghana, Nepal, and Tanzania.

The report situates UNICEF's ECD work against recent international agendas as well as UNICEF's strategic plans. In terms of the former, in 2002 a special session of the United Nations, attended by 180 countries, came up with the World Fit for Children agenda. This agenda included commitments to expand and improve ECCE by 2015. The evaluation report suggests that ECD is also important for the achievement of MDGs 1 (extreme poverty), 2 (primary education), and 4 (child mortality). It does not refer to MDG 3 on gender equality and women's empowerment. In terms of MDG 4, the report notes that UNICEF's Medium-Term Strategic Plan (MTSP) for 2002–2005 had IECD as one of five organizational priorities. In contrast, the MTSP for 2006–2013 has ECD as a cross-cutting strategy. ECD is therefore referred to in all five focus areas, but is most clearly defined in respect of the first and second focus areas, namely (1) Young Child Survival and Development and (2) Basic Education and Gender Equality.

The report provides a brief history of the development of interest in ECD. It states that in the 1960s the focus was on early education, and in particular pre-school, as a means to socialize children and prepare them for school. In the mid-1960s, interest grew in parenting education, with Head Start in the United States as a leading example of this approach. In the mid-1970s, UNICEF began talking about ECD's importance for children's psychosocial wellbeing and survival, but the interest in education still dominated. By the 1980s, the focus was on decreasing infant mortality and morbidity rather than development more generally. In 1989, the CRC laid out the need for a holistic approach, while one year later the Jomtien Declaration again prioritized the educational aspect. In 2001, UNICEF's *State of the World's Children* report had ECCD as its focus. What is notably missing from this history is any indication of an interest in what these concerns mean for gender equality.

In the evaluation proper there are repeated references to the gaps, even in target countries, in reaching disadvantaged children through ECCD initiatives, as well as limited data on this aspect. The report notes that expansion has largely been confined to districts where there is UNICEF support and has relied on a volunteer workforce. It suggests that this is not sustainable.

None of the recommendations of the evaluation is directly relevant in respect of informal workers' child care needs. However, the discussion of barriers to ECD expansion notes, among others, that the short hours of services are inconvenient for parents who work and that the “gifts” for teachers expected from parents for “free” services are unaffordable for the poorest.

Several of the recommendations relate to the need to reach the most disadvantaged, including one that requires UNICEF to “allocate substantial resources” for this purpose, but does not require that governments do so. This is surprising given that the report notes elsewhere that inadequate government funding renders ECD programmes reliant on community contributions and results in poor quality services, which, in turn, reduces demand for the services. The recommendation in respect of “parent/caregiver training” could result in additional expectations in respect to parents.

The report notes that UNICEF's work has benefited from support from other actors, including international NGOs and donors (Aga Khan Foundation, Bernard van Leer Foundation, Open Society Institute, Save the Children), multilateral agencies as well as ECD-specific groupings. The latter include the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development, established in 1984 and two regional networks, the ECD working group of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa, and the Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood. In Tanzania, one of the case study countries, there is a national network of NGOs, the Tanzania Early Childhood Development Network.

In July 2012 UNICEF and ILO co-hosted a Ministerial Roundtable at ECOSOC which brought together representatives (including some ministers) from 22 Member States, officials from the ECOSOC Bureau, UNICEF, ILO, and UN Women and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The theme was: “Workers with family responsibilities: connecting child development and the Decent Work Agenda”.

The two agencies prepared a substantial report for the event. The paragraph below (UNICEF and ILO, 2012: 17) presents the motivation for the concern with child care. The paragraph acknowledges women's disproportionate responsibility for children and how that affects their income-earning opportunities. It notes, in particular, that this responsibility may mean that women end up in informal or otherwise “vulnerable” employment. It argues that the end result is that children are deprived. The paragraph thus covers many of the essential arguments, but perhaps with more concern about the ultimate result of child neglect than for what it means for the women.

*When societies fail to provide good solutions to support the reconciliation of the dual roles of work and childcare responsibilities, negative outcomes ensue, both for economies and for families. Parents — most often women since they bear an unequal share of all family responsibilities including care for children — often must forego opportunities for decent work. Many choose part-time work or settle for vulnerable and informal economic activities that allow for some flexibility but carry their own economic and social costs. Gender inequality is reinforced, both within the home and in the workplace, since women's position in the labour market is undermined, and unequal sharing of family responsibilities is perpetuated. Household income is severely reduced, and may be inadequate to meet basic family needs, such as health*

*care, food, nutrition and education, especially in communities already beset by a high incidence of vulnerability and poverty. As a result, children are deprived of opportunities for quality care and learning.*

A critical reading finds the document to have an instrumentalist approach to child care that is balanced by other references to the need for initiatives that “diminish women’s overrepresentation in marginal forms of paid work” (UNICEF and ILO, 2012: 18). The report also cites research from Latin America that shows an increase in labour force participation rates of women accompanying expansion in provision of child care services. It argues that this happens both because women’s time is freed up and because jobs become available as child carers.

The report calls for “strong investments” that span the life cycle of the child, starting with pregnancy and spanning childbirth, maternity protection, parental leave, and early childhood care and development through adolescence to entry into paid work. The extension to school-age children brings recognition of the need for after-school services that suit working women.

Beyond maternity-related interventions, the report suggests that workers need leave to address their children’s health needs, leave to attend to matters related to their children’s education, and work schedules that allow them to care for and engage with their children. All of these are things that can be negotiated with an employer, but are less easy to conceptualize for informal workers who are self-employed, or in disguised employment.

Some of the examples of (presumably) good practice interventions in developing countries cited in the report relate to provision of child-related grants that provide income that might be used for provision of child care. However, these grants are not targeted directly at child care and, given the size of the grants and the many other needs of poor families, are not likely to be used for purchasing child care services. Grants, such as the one cited in Kenya, are intended for the caregivers of orphans and thus do not address the child care needs of “ordinary” mothers. The report also cites India’s National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (NREGA) and the requirement that facilities such as medical aid, drinking water, and shade be provided, but make no mention of the provision of child care.

On a more positive level, the report cites SEWA’s establishment of self-help cooperatives that provide child care services; Chile’s substantial expansion of free public nursery places for poor children under 2 years of age, as well as those aged 2-4 years; a child care programme at SOCFINAF coffee company in Kenya which provides free worker-friendly (in terms of location and hours) child care services that are utilized by, among others, seasonal workers. It also provides examples from developed countries of provision of child care services that are not linked to particular types of employment or, indeed, any employment at all. However, it notes that when Greece was forced into restructuring to obtain an international bailout, child care services were among the hardest hit by the cutbacks.

There are several references in the publication to informal workers and the related child care needs. For example, the report notes that among those working informally, “women who are working from home, on farms, or in settings such as street vending or petty trading, typically keep their infants with them, and breastfeed on the job” (UNICEF and ILO, 2012: 37). One of a limited number of profiles of workers needing child care involves a rural couple who have migrated to a slum in Dhaka, Bangladesh, where the man does informal low-skilled construction work while the woman is a street vendor.



The report suggests that in some cases – and research in Chile is cited – poor parents may keep their children at home not because of the absence of cost for alternative child care, but because of a “cultural” perception that home care is better.

Sabates-Wheeler and Roelen (2011) observe that UNICEF is one of the main advocates for “child-sensitive social protection” (CSSP) and “have pushed the global agenda on CSSP, in terms of both definition and advocacy.” However, they argue that CSSP is not well defined apart from references to the various vulnerabilities of different children, and the need for human capital investment because children are the productive adults of the future. Sabates-Wheeler and Roelen argue that a better understanding of CSSP would need to consider the needs of carers as well as those of children.

## United Nations Women

UN Women is the UN agency that focuses most specifically on women and gender, and the agency has economic empowerment as one of its goals. One might therefore expect it to have a strong position on child care as it relates to women’s employment, if not specifically to informal employment. To date, however, the agency does not seem to have taken an explicit position. This might change in the foreseeable future as the newly established research unit is planning to explore the issue.

Article 11.2(c) of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women reads as follows:

*States Parties shall take appropriate measures to encourage the provision of the necessary supporting social services to enable parents to combine family obligations with work responsibilities and participation in public life, in particular through promoting the establishment and development of a network of child-care facilities.*

However the term “promotion” places no obligation on governments to provide or fund child care facilities.

## World Bank

As seen in the introduction, the World Bank was an early important actor in the ECD field. In the early years the motivation for the Bank related to brain and economic development. More recently there has been more acknowledgement of the link between child care and women’s economic engagement. Bibler and Zuckerman (2013) note that this link was made already in the Bank’s 2001 *Engendering Development through gender equality in rights, resources and voice*. Eyben (2013) notes, in contrast, that despite the “extensive” analysis of unpaid care in the main text of the report, the list of major “sticky issues” in the executive summary did not include care.

In some cases the Bank has also explicitly made a link between child care and informal employment. Thus Bibler and Zuckerman (2013) note that the World Development Report of 2012 emphasized the need for interventions to reduce the care burden on women given that “the lack of childcare pushes mothers from formal into informal employment”. Esquivel (2013) shows the World Development Report of 2013 (produced in 2012), on Jobs, continuing in this vein, with the acknowledgment

of how the scarcity of care obstructs women's engagement in the labour market, and the observation that public provision or subsidization of child care can reduce the costs associated with women engaging in paid work. The 2013 report also welcomes the adoption of the Domestic Workers Convention and the Domestic Workers Recommendation.

Despite the explicit acknowledgement of unpaid care, Bibler and Zuckerman (2013) find that none of the 36 employment-related Bank-supported projects they examined in Malawi, Mali, Niger, and Rwanda demonstrated any provisions in respect to care. They suggest further that the World Development Report of 2013, which focused on jobs, "de-emphasize[d]" the issue of care. They object, in particular, to the claim in the publication that women "prefer" home-based activities so as to be able to perform both these and income-earning activities. They suggest that this framing does not acknowledge the gender division of labour and the lack of affordable alternatives in respect to child care.

A UNICEF evaluation report (UNICEF, 2011) notes that the World Bank's Fast Track Initiative, which has a clear focus on education, has been the source of "substantial" funding for ECD.

The Bank's website<sup>1</sup> situates its work on ECD within the Child and Youth Group in the Human Development Network. It describes the "primary mission" of the Bank in ECD as being to improve knowledge of both Bank staff and others of ECD "programming" and to increase (Bank) lending for ECD. The motivation for the work refers to brain development and the contribution that good health and nutrition for young children can make for their later development and economic contribution to society. It cites work by Heckman that suggests that there is a higher economic return to investing in children than to investing in low-skilled adults. It notes further that ECD contributes to social equity and can "address the needs of mothers while helping their children". It observes that "safe child care has become a necessity" as women's participation in the labour force has increased and an increasing number of households are headed by women.

## World Health Organization

A research study on child care commissioned by the World Health Organization (WHO) focuses on the importance of the relationship of children, and particularly those most at risk, with their primary caregivers for their survival and health (Richter, 2004). The document appears to make no mention of the need for child care. At worst, its arguments could be used to undermine demands for non-parental child care on the basis of the importance of the relationship with the primary caregiver parent. Alternatively, one could argue that a mother who is stressed because she is unable to balance work and child care demands will have a damaging relationship with the child.

A subsequent report (Irwin *et al.*, 2007) was commissioned by WHO under the rubric of social determinants of health. The report uses the term ECD in a broad sense rather than in a narrow "child care" sense. It observes that across all countries "inequities in socio-economic circumstances result in inequities in ECD" and that resources are needed to reduce this effect as a child's "right of citizenship" rather than a luxury available only to children of parents who have the necessary means to provide what is needed. (This terminology implicitly raises the question of the rights of non-citizens.)

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<sup>1</sup> <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTCY/EXTECD/0,,menuPK:344945~pagePK:-149018~piPK:149093~theSitePK:344939.html>

It acknowledges further that parents and other caregivers often need assistance from “local, regional, national and international agencies” to provide what is necessary for the child’s well-being and development, and that this assistance is, ultimately, a contribution to society as a whole.

### **Official Development Agencies**

Eyben (2012) presents an insider view of why international development agencies have historically neglected unpaid care, and why the analysis of feminist economists has been ignored, including by gender specialists in the agencies. Eyben concludes with the suggestion that activists might be more successful in getting care on the development policy agenda if they understand how “the structure of gender norms and the politics of evidence” in these agencies result in neglect of the issue, and if they become aware of and use their relatively privileged position to build alliances. She argues for “a strategy of a succession of small wins in naming, framing, claiming and programming care” (Eyben, 2012: 7).

Eyben refers to the informal economy, but does not do so in respect of those needing care for their children. Instead, she uses this term to characterize the location in which most paid care in developing countries is provided, where “middle class families hire poor women as servants who are often underpaid and over-worked ” (Eyben, 2013: 7).

Eyben recognizes unpaid care elsewhere in arguing that attempts to assign a monetary value to (unpaid) care run the risk of bolstering the dominant ideology which assigns value only to that which is potentially tradable. She contrasts advocacy for girls’ education, which serves capitalism’s needs at the same time as promoting social justice, with advocacy for recognition of unpaid care. She notes that while advocacy for girls’ education can use an instrumentalist approach, a call for recognition of unpaid care “creates a problem rather than solving one.” Meanwhile, arguments that women are less productive because of the care demands placed on them could result in care being seen as an impediment to economic growth. She also cites concerns among gender advocates in countries with strong conservative religious lobbies that promotion of the importance of unpaid care will encourage the belief that women’s place is in the home.

Eyben highlights trends that offer opportunities for recognition of unpaid care. These include efforts to increase women’s employment, the increasing numbers of elderly people in the population of middle and high-income countries, and HIV and AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa. (In respect of the latter, it is the situation of community care workers – many of whom work on a completely unpaid basis while others receive some form of compensation – rather than family-based carers that has attracted most attention.)

Eyben cautions against use of terms such as “burden” in advocacy around care on the basis that this can be seen as implying that care is bad, rather than acknowledging its positive aspects. She highlights that the rights associated with care include both the right to receive the necessary care and the right not to be exploited when providing care. The first right is, at least to some extent, encapsulated in the right to social security in situations of especial vulnerability such as childhood, old age, disability or chronic illness.

## Non-Government Foundations and Donors

While many non-government foundations and donors support ECD and related activities, Bernard van Leer Foundation is among the few that has this as a strong focus. Some other donors have ECD as part of a broader focus on education. Some fund ECD activities, but they are not explicitly referred to on their websites. The paragraphs that follow summarize what is found on the websites of ECD-supporting funders mentioned in the literature or by ECD experts.

The website of the **Aga Khan Foundation**<sup>2</sup> makes no special mention of ECD.

The **Banyan Tree Global Foundation**<sup>3</sup> is the social responsibility arm of a hospitality company. Its primary focus is sustainable development, to which it aims to contribute through “responsible tourism”. Education is one of its foci, as is gender equality and women’s empowerment. However, the website does not specifically mention ECD or child care.

The **Bernard van Leer Foundation**<sup>4</sup> has supported ECD efforts for four decades. Its interest is in promoting “cost-effective approaches that:

- work for the most disadvantaged
- focus on building sustained demand for services amongst the very poor
- achieve economies of scale, and
- explore funding arrangements that are viable in resource poor environments or situations where public funding is likely to be too weak “to go it alone” (website).

Many of the efforts have focused on the years immediately preceding school, but the Foundation also promotes ECCE for younger children. The interest goes beyond child care centres to child development more generally. The Foundation sees itself as virtually the only voice with an explicit focus on the impact of children’s physical environment on their development. This focus could be relevant for informal workers such as street vendors, in particular.

The foundation is relatively small and sees its role as introducing innovative ideas. It does this by, among others, publication of a regular magazine, *Early Childhood Matters* (which is available online), as well as working papers. A scan of the topics covered in *Early Childhood Matters* and the working papers gives a sense of the way in which the foundation aims to explore innovative topics. However, the scan suggests there has been very little coverage of informal workers.

As far the magazine is concerned, an issue of 2013 focused on child care for seasonal migrant workers (Iltus, 2013) but does not seem to deal with informal workers specifically. An article in 2009 (Moss, 2009) critiques the market approach to ECCD, as exemplified in Australia, the UK, and the Netherlands, on the basis that it encapsulates “neoliberalism’s deepest values, assumptions and beliefs”. In doing so, it rejects the idea that users of these services are “consumers” similar to those using other private services. It proposes an alternative model – which it states is not the only possible

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.akdn.org/akf>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.banyantreeglobalfoundation.com/our\\_focus/education](http://www.banyantreeglobalfoundation.com/our_focus/education)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.bernardvanleer.org/>

alternative – of “democratic experimentalism” where ECCD is seen as a public responsibility. However, the paper does not speak directly to the issues relevant for our purposes.

One of the working papers (Wunschel, 2003) describes how an unused multi-storey car park in a working class area of Berlin was developed in a “children’s park” which served as an ECD centre. However, it does not discuss the types of jobs in which the children’s parents worked.

Vandenbroeck (2006), in another working paper, describes the impact of the forces of globalization and privatization on child care policy and practice in Belgium, which is taken as typical of a social democratic welfare state which historically had state-funded child care services. Perhaps of relevance for the current focus on parenting programmes in ECD initiatives, as noted by Vandenbroeck, is that education of poor parents was seen as a solution to high levels of child mortality as these were attributed to ignorance or neglect on the part of mothers. The paper also highlights how Bowlby’s work on attachment, commissioned by WHO, laid the basis for strong efforts to educate young mothers. Vandenbroeck notes that subsequent emphasis on development psychology was criticized by feminist researchers for the way it “imprisoned women in their maternal role” at a time when the need for their labour in industry had decreased. In describing a recent initiative that targets the Turkish-Belgian mothers of preschool children, Vandenbroeck suggests that the focus on support can be interpreted as meaning that parents are responsible for the inequalities in Belgian pre-school services and for the success or otherwise of their children.

A later working paper (Pence and Nsamenang, 2008) discusses how the western “Minority World” construction of childhood and motherhood has spread to the “Majority World”. It names among the elements of this construction the neoliberal view of the child as an economic investment. It argues that the various constructs establish the foundation for the “grand narrative” of ECCD, on which basis they build a case for ECCD in sub-Saharan Africa. (It is not clear if they see the neoliberal view as a problem or not.)

The **Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation**<sup>5</sup> supports efforts to promote education in Washington State in the US that span children from birth to college level. There is no mention of support to pre-school children outside of the work in Washington.

**Catholic Relief Services**<sup>6</sup> is the international humanitarian agency of the Catholic community in the United States. Their ECD focus targets children affected by AIDS.

The **Children’s Investment Fund Foundation**<sup>7</sup> has educational attainment as one of its “priority impact areas” but the website does not mention ECD in particular.

The **Elma Foundation supports ECD**, education and health initiatives in sub-Saharan Africa. It has no official web-site as its donor prefers anonymity.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gatesfoundation.org/What-We-Do/US-Program/Washington-State>

<sup>6</sup> [www.crs.org](http://www.crs.org)

<sup>7</sup> <http://ciff.org/priority-impact-areas/educational-attainment>

The **Open Society Foundation's**<sup>8</sup> work in this area dates back to 1994. Its Early Childhood Programme supports activities in Africa, Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States, Latin America, and the Middle East and North Africa. The emphasis is on parent and community engagement, professional development, and government accountability. Special attention is paid to the needs of children who are disadvantaged, for example through poverty, disability, or membership of a minority group.

In November 2001, the **Rockefeller Brothers Fund** brought together 33 ECCD experts in a conference entitled “Meeting the Challenge of Universal Access to Early Childhood Education”. The proceedings of the conference (Rickell, 2001) reveal that the focus was on children in the US. The website of the Fund<sup>9</sup> states that the New Grantmaking Guidelines and Restructuring no longer provide for grant-making in respect of early childhood education. The Fund does still provide some funding in respect to children affected by HIV and AIDS, some of which might relate to pre-school children.

**Save The Children International**<sup>10</sup> supports pre-school care as part of its focus on education. Its Literacy Boost programme aims to develop basic reading skills among young children in countries such as Malawi, Mozambique, Nepal, and Pakistan.

The organization describes itself as “the world’s leading independent organization for children” (Save The Children, undated) and works in 119 countries. Early childhood care and development serves as its third strategic objective for the period ending 2015. The motivation for this work, while focusing on the benefits for children, notes that ECCD programmes also allow more mothers to (do paid) work.

In addition to donors who support ECD, there are several donors who have begun supporting initiatives looking at care as a topic of interest in itself.

**Oxfam Great Britain** (Oxfam GB)’s Innovations in Care initiative aims to make care work more visible as a way of both ensuring that people are cared for effectively and of promoting women’s rights. Esquivel’s (2013) background conceptual paper for Oxfam distinguishes between those who have a social justice perspective and see care as a right, and those with a social investment perspective who see care as a poverty- or employment-related issue. She observes that the social justice perspective results in calls for redistribution of the responsibility of care, and active government involvement, while the social investment perspective focuses on efficiency gains and justifies interventions on the basis of beneficiary vulnerability.

Esquivel observes that defining social protection as the “minimal level of income or consumption guaranteed by the state as a right for all citizens and residents” results in income transfers that cover basic goods and services, but that do not include money to cover care costs. Instead, these transfers assume that care will be freely available from families. She also cautions on arguments for redistribution of care which focus only on the household level, highlighting that in many families there may be no other adults with which care can be shared. She suggests that “workplace nurseries or crèches

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.childhealthresearch.eu/people-and-network/riche-partner-locations/open-societyfoundations-early-childhood-program>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.rbf.org/news/stephen-b-heintz-president-rbf-announces-new-grantmaking-guidelines-and-restructuring-funds>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.savethechildren.net/>

for working parents” redistribute care to the public sphere. However, this does not deal with cases, such as that of informal workers, where workplace provision is unlikely.

## Child Care Support and Advocacy Organizations

The **Consultative Group on Early Childhood and Development**<sup>11</sup> is a global inter-agency structure that has links with regional networks. It was established in 1984 by a group of donor agencies. It describes its focus as being on children age 0 to 8 years, their families, and communities. It aims to promote “a more diverse and creative range of ECCD activities” that address the needs of children in different circumstances. The third of the Ten Myths discussed on the website states that ECCD is a foreign “western” concept which is not applicable to other cultural concepts. The website argues that the concept is valid given changes to traditional ways of life brought about by migration, armed conflict, disease, and “other disturbing factors”.

Early Education, the **British Association for Early Childhood Education**<sup>12</sup> was established in 1923. It supports ECD practitioners across all settings as well as staff of local authorities through publications, training, and events. The overall aim is to improve early childhood education (rather than care) policy.

**Eurochild**<sup>13</sup> evolved in 2003/04 out of the European Forum for Child Welfare. Its aim is to ensure that EU debates on family and parenting support encompass a child rights perspective and have the child’s best interest as a central concern. “Family and Parenting Support” is one of four member-driven thematic working groups, while “Early Years, Education and Care” is another. The forum sees “(u)niversal, high quality, accessible, and affordable early years’ education and care services” as core to the “fight against child poverty and social exclusion.” Their overall aim to have children’s needs and rights acknowledged within labour market policies and labour benefits and conditions (Eurofound, 2011) contrasts sharply with the silence on these issues from some of the other bodies. The forum also aims for complete integration of provision for children under 3 and those between 3 and school-going age. It favours universal access rather than intervention targeted only at vulnerable groups, but acknowledges the need to ensure that services reach vulnerable groups. It argues that support for families is not antithetical to out-of-home care but that instead, the two reinforce each other. It acknowledges women’s “legitimate claim for economic independence and equal rights in the labour market” but notes that this must be accompanied by adequate provision of quality care services to avoid women being forced to utilize informal care and “second-best choices”. Further, child care should not be seen only as an “enabling mechanism” for women’s economic engagement but instead seen as a right for all children.

**Zero to Three: National Centre for Infants, Toddlers and Families**<sup>14</sup> is a US non-profit organization that aims to provide parents, professionals, and policymakers with the necessary knowledge and skills for early development. The focus is on babies and toddlers, and the website suggests that the emphasis with parents is on their own role in respect to the children.

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<sup>11</sup> [www.ecdgroup.com](http://www.ecdgroup.com)

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.early-education.org.uk>

<sup>13</sup> [www.eurochild.org](http://www.eurochild.org)

<sup>14</sup> [www.zerotothree.org](http://www.zerotothree.org)

## Research and Academic Initiatives on Care

Recent years have seen a growing interest in the area of care in general. This is reflected, among others, in the CSW's devoting a full annual session to this topic. It is recognized on Oxfam GB's website in the statement that: "Women's unpaid care work has recently been recognized as a major human rights issue." It is seen in the outcome of the 11th Regional Conference on Women in Latin America which declared care to be "a universal right, which requires strong policy measures to effectively achieve it, and the co-responsibility of the society as a whole, the state, and the private sector" (cited in Esquivel, 2013). It is also seen in academic and related writing and research initiatives. This sub-section briefly refers to some of the relevant initiatives.

Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC), UK's Department for International Development (DFID) and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation are partners in the **Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women** (GrOW) programme on women's economic empowerment, gender equality, and growth in low-income countries. The programme aims to explore how economic empowerment promotes growth and, conversely, how economic growth can benefit (poor) women if policies and practices are appropriately designed.

The literature review for GrOW discusses the "care economy" alongside other topics. It acknowledges – and provides supporting evidence – that women are disproportionately represented in "vulnerable forms of informal employment". It observes that women's increasing participation in the paid labour market has not gone together with a matching change in the gendered division of unpaid care work. It observes further that the literature shows that women with young children are more likely than other women to be selfemployed, including in home-based work. It notes as an under-researched area interventions that might reduce women's child care and other unpaid work and specifically refers to workplace-based child care. The framework for the programme includes "constraints on women in the wider society and economy, including paid and unpaid (child) care work" among the gender-based "constraints and choices" that the programme seeks to address.

The **Counting Women's Work project**<sup>15</sup>, which is hosted by the Development Policy Research Unit at the University of Cape Town, is being funded by the Hewlett Foundation and IDRC. It aims to utilize the methodology developed in the National Transfer Accounts for research in middle- and low-income countries. The methodology combines statistics on market-based work and unpaid work (from time-use studies) to develop cross-country comparisons and pose policy-related questions about the gender patterns revealed. Child care is one of the sub-categories that will be used in analysis of unpaid work.

**Friedrich Ebert Stiftung's** draft concept note "On Gender, Care and Sustainable Economy" (FES genanet, 2014: 6.2) includes a paragraph on the "heavy and unequal care responsibilities" borne by women. Suggested solutions include access to high quality child care. The document notes further that care should be recognized as a social and collective, rather than individual, responsibility and problem.

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<sup>15</sup> [http://www.cww-dpru.uct.ac.za/about\\_cww](http://www.cww-dpru.uct.ac.za/about_cww)



**Interactions**<sup>16</sup> is a relatively new cross-organizational research initiative which is led by the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex. The research team includes staff of Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) Development Institute, ActionAid, and Indonesia's SMERU Research Institute alongside staff of the Institute of Development Studies. One of the first activities in respect of care was a literature on policies related to social protection and ECD in 144 low- and middle-income countries (Chopra, 2013). Later planned activities will include national and international advocacy.

The literature review is explicitly feminist and branded as one of a series of publications on the Empowerment of Women and Girls. The first sentence of the executive summary states bluntly that “[un]paid care work is directly linked to the economic empowerment of women and girls.” Overall, the review revealed few examples of care-sensitive policies. Where these were found, they generally aimed to redistribute care from family (women) to government, rather than within families (which is not, in itself, a problem), and did not try to reduce the drudgery of care. Where care was redistributed to government, this was usually out of recognition of the need for women to engage in paid labour.

Two examples of care-sensitive policies are highlighted on the web-page of the initiative, both of which relate to child care. Firstly, in respect to social protection, public works programmes in Bangladesh and India were found to provide crèche facilities at the work site for workers' children. Secondly, in the ECD area, a Bangladesh policy provides for funding of crèches at schools so that pupils can leave their younger siblings there while they study. The review has very few references to informal work.

### 3. Conclusion

The overall finding from this paper is that there is extremely little literature available on child care provision for (women) informal workers, and even less that suggests that this should form part of a social protection floor. Among the international institutions that cover related topics, the ILO is the one that comes closest to discussing the issue. However, the ILO generally does this as an aside – noting that the needs of informal workers is not the core focus of a particular publication, but does need to be considered.

Beyond the international organizations, the Bernard van Leer Foundation stands out as having promoted the ECD agenda for several decades, as well as having engaged with a large range of different ways in which ECD can be encouraged, the benefits of ECD, and the needs that need to be addressed when designing initiatives.

On the side of civil society, as well as within international agencies, there has been a recent uptick in interest in and recognition of unpaid care work. However, many of the statements about its importance adopt a very broad sweep, with no initiatives that directly focus on child care for informal workers.

The paper thus suggests that there may be a range of potential allies for WIEGO's Child Care Initiative, but quite a bit of convincing will be needed as to why the various actors should pay particular attention, and devote energy and resources, to this issue.

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<sup>16</sup> <http://interactions.eldis.org/unpaid-care-work>

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**About WIEGO:** Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing is a global research-policy-action network that seeks to improve the status of the working poor, especially women, in the informal economy. WIEGO builds alliances with, and draws its membership from, three constituencies: membership-based organizations of informal workers, researchers and statisticians working on the informal economy, and professionals from development agencies interested in the informal economy. WIEGO pursues its objectives by helping to build and strengthen networks of informal worker organizations; undertaking policy analysis, statistical research and data analysis on the informal economy; providing policy advice and convening policy dialogues on the informal economy; and documenting and disseminating good practice in support of the informal workforce. For more information visit: [www.wiego.org](http://www.wiego.org).



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