



EDITORIAL: THE HINDU

GENERAL STUDIES 2: SOCIAL JUSTICE
TOPIC: VULNERABLE PEOPLE

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Centring care in India's economic policy

Union Budget 2025 & Gender Budget

Increased Gender Budget Allocation

- ₹4,49,028.68 crore allocated, a 37.3% rise from FY24.
- Makes up 8.86% of the total Budget.
- Increase mainly due to PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (24% of GB), not care infrastructure investment.
- Budget ignores the care economy despite its recognition in Economic Surveys.

Unpaid Care & Domestic Work (UCDW) Burden on Women

- Women globally spend 17.8% of their time on unpaid care work.
- In India, women do 40% more unpaid work than South African and Chinese women.
- 53% of Indian women stay out of the workforce due to care responsibilities, compared to just 1.1% of men.
- Poor women work 17-19 hours daily, balancing paid and unpaid work.

Extra Burdens in the Global South

- Women handle water collection, fuel gathering, farm work, and household chores.
- Poor infrastructure forces women to spend 73% of their time on these tasks.
- Women spend 5 hours daily collecting water, while men spend just 1.5 hours.
- Climate change is worsening this, with water-related unpaid work projected to cost \$1.4 billion by 2050.

Proposed Solutions

1. Recognizing Unpaid Work

- 2019 Time Use Survey: Women spend 7 hours daily on unpaid work.
- Adding time-use surveys to policymaking can help address the issue.



2. Reducing the Burden

- Invest in time-saving tech & affordable care infrastructure.
- Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) extended to 2028 but faces delays.
- Expand childcare, eldercare, and assistive services for better workforce participation.

3. Redistributing Care Work

- Shift responsibilities from homes to the State and within households.
- ₹1 lakh crore Urban Challenge Fund can improve water and sanitation.
- Smart Cities Mission can boost care infrastructure.
- Bogotá's "Care Blocks" model could centralize care services.

4. More Women in Decision-Making

- Women in policymaking lead to better solutions.
- Exclusion results in policies that ignore real challenges.

Conclusion

- Women are key to economic growth, but care work is overlooked.
- A well-funded, targeted plan is needed to make care work a priority in development.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/centring-care-in-indias-economic-policy/article69281750.ece>