



The Gendered Impact of the Economic Crisis: A crisis of care

Collective For Research & Training on
Development – Action



“Actually, there is no crisis – the current situation is simply the logical and the natural consequence of the neoliberal policy and the flawed and irresponsible financial governance system of IFIs. Therefore, those who created this crisis cannot solve it.”

Dokmanovic, M. (WIDE and Women's working group for financing for development) http://www.un-ngls.org/IMG/pdf_mirjana_dokmanovic.pdf



Both global and local care regimes are further reinforcing and strengthening unequal divisions of labour among women of different classes and origins.



Key feminist concerns

“We need to make sure we create a world where there is solidarity: This is so antithetical to the current economic model of competitive individualism”

Lynch, K. WIDE AC, June09



Feminists' understanding of the economy

- A complex of intertwined monetized and non-monetised systems, of formal and informal markets, of households, of profit and provision based sectors.
- A threefold analysis: empire of market; power relations between North and South; and gendered power relations
- Intersectionality of capitalism and patriarchy!



Questions to be addressed:

- What are women's economic activities?
- Where do they work and what do they do?
- How do they survive?
- What is their contributions to human survival and to building a social capital?
- How are they rewarded?
- To which form of economic discrimination are they subjected?
- How are they organized and how do they influence governments?



The main fallacy in the current system:

Only income generating work is work!

→ This assumption directs the “solutions” to the crisis towards the “real economy”, e.g. industry/car industry: a typically male sector!

BUT: industrial and financial value creation is based on a thick layer of social regeneration and care work which are invisible and non-valorised.

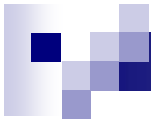


How will the crisis have a differential gender impact?

Women, social reproduction and reduction of social expenditures.

Shifting of cost from paid to unpaid sector:
whatever is not provided by the market or the state is borne by women through their unpaid reproductive and care work.

An assumption that the capacity of women is elastic and infinite!



Accelerated privatisation and/or shrinking of public goods and services.

Citizen = consumer + client + autonomous + privatized (individual capacity to buy and sell products) + self-caring

Market disrespects and under-values what is considered to be "typically female work" that revolves around "unpaid care work".

- Hugely problematic for public care provided by the state as tendency is to reduce cost of care services.
- Women considered as the social safety bags to cushion severe consequences of the crisis.



e.g. Capital accumulation which relies on increased women's paid work is not matched by a compensating reduction in the amount of unpaid work that women and girls **have to do** to meet their social obligations and expectations.

Imbalance between what is considered to be the “real economy” (i.e. productive economy) and the care economy.



- Women migrants and job losses → impact on girls education, remittances, etc...
- Increase in girls labor
- Decreasing social entitlements
- Jeopardised life chances
- Strengthening the trend feminisation of poverty



Feminists responses to the crisis

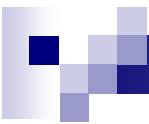
- What are the links between care crises, proposed remedies and gender inequalities?
- What kind of solutions do we have as feminists to challenge the intersectional structures of power, the binary gender order and the old and newly reshaped inequalities, and to promote alternative concepts of work, time, benefit, livelihood and well-being?
- Care and unpaid work have been important topics for the new feminist movement for a long time.
- The economic crisis prompted the linkage the care economy to the other aspects of the economy, particularly to the global financial crisis and to the ongoing debates on development and welfare in which gender equality and social justice are at stake.



- A system that is inclusive and cares for the rights and position of ALL women
- Who is responsible for care: The state? Women? Both?
- Some care benefits (part time work, paid maternity,...) can reinforce women's role as primary caretakers



- Focusing on state social policies and collective forms of care (broader than anecdotal micro-level interventions such as getting men involved in care-giving).
- Shifting the care discourse from the private to the public sphere
- Question the idea of “work”: rather than calling for more jobs, calling for a re-distribution of socially necessary job.



Toward a Gender Aware Stimulus Package

- *Reduce care burden*: recognize, account for and redistribute unpaid work: decent work for women and men; infrastructure (state regulation & provisioning).
- *Socialize risk*: regulate finance; access to minimum social safety nets for everyone; broaden tax base through global response; popular and gender responsive budgeting; ODA/FfD; cost human rights commitments and align with budgets.



- “Key feminist concerns regarding the crisis”. WIDE AC, June 2009
- CRTD.A Regional Gender and Inclusive Citizenship Programme 2009 - Midterm review, August 2009
- Unlocking the Development Box: Markers Along the way towards a gender sensitive Development Agenda, Draft, Williams, M. December 2008
- WIDE Annual Conference 2009 ‘Care Economy and Care Crisis’, June, Basel, Switzerland
- Context and Gender Aware Responses Isabella Bakker, York University
WIDE Conference Care Economy and Care Crisis, June 2009