

# Valuing and Investing in Unpaid Care and Domestic Work

COUNTRY  
CASE STUDY

## Uzbekistan





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## Explanatory notes

The analyses in the *Valuing and Investing in Unpaid Care and Domestic Work in Uzbekistan* report are based on data and information available up to the end of December 2022. Groupings of countries and territories or areas referred to are defined as follows.

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## Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CEDAW	United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CER	Centre for Economic Research
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
KNOMAD	Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development
NSDS	National Strategy for the Development of Statistics
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Fund
UZS	Uzbekistani so'm
WCU	Women's Committee of Uzbekistan

All \$ references are United States dollars.

## Section 1

# Introduction

The care economy comprises of the total of all the paid and unpaid care work performed in a country or society. While paid care includes economic activity in sectors such as education, health care, personal or home care, social work, and domestic work performed for pay, unpaid care work consists of direct care activities such as care of dependents (children, the sick, persons with disabilities, older persons) as well as indirect care activities like cooking, cleaning, domestic chores, food provisioning, fuelwood and water collection (ESCAP, 2021c, p. 7). The vast amount of unpaid care work performed within the family is usually not included in calculations of gross domestic product or economic growth (Charmes, 2019). This phenomenon has been termed as the 'hidden care economy' where the unpaid care and domestic work enables the reproduction of labour and society, thereby supporting the production or market economy to thrive (Enríquez, 2018).

Data from time-use surveys and other labour force and household data show that the world over, without exception, women perform three-quarters of all unpaid care work (ILO, 2018). Women spend on average 3.2 times more hours on unpaid care work than men. This translates to 4 hours and 25 minutes per day against 1 hour and 23 minutes spent by men on unpaid care activities (ibid). In no country do men and women share equally in the unpaid care work and domestic tasks, and in some countries or regions the skew of women doing more is even higher. For example, the proportion of unpaid care work performed by women and girls in Asia and the Pacific region amounts to 4 times more than men (ibid, p. 56).

This represents a serious concern for gender equality outcomes. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on gender equality notes the inequitable distribution of unpaid care and domestic work as one of the factors impeding progress towards women's economic engagement. Target 5.4 states that it is imperative to *recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate*.<sup>1</sup>

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) has taken cognizance of this lopsided distribution of care work on the shoulders of women and girls as a focal area of attention. Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, ESCAP has commissioned a series of research projects to assess the gendered effects of the public health crisis on the care economy in the Asia-Pacific region as a whole and within the ASEAN sub-region specifically.<sup>2</sup> To increase its technical assistance to member States, ESCAP has additionally commissioned country level case studies to showcase the promising policy practices and programmatic interventions by member States in valuing and advancing the unpaid care component of the care economy. This case study on Uzbekistan forms a part of a series of country technical case studies that include Cambodia, Indonesia and the Philippines.

The aim of this report is to highlight the Republic of Uzbekistan's commitment to furthering the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5.4 by recognizing and

<sup>1</sup> SDG Indicators

<sup>2</sup> See ESCAP publications: *COVID-19 policy responses to unpaid care in Asia and the Pacific*, available at <https://www.unescap.org/kp/2021/covid-19-and-unpaid-care-economy-asia-and-pacific> and *Valuing unpaid care work in ASEAN countries*, available at <https://www.unescap.org/kp/2021/addressing-unpaid-care-work-asean>





A clothing retailer in Uzbekistan. Photo © Janarbek Amankulov / UN Women

valuing unpaid care and domestic work and offer recommendations to further this agenda. It employs a gendered institutional analysis lens to examine the legislative, normative and structural conditions within Uzbekistan that shape policy design and practice. It is widely recognized among policy analysts that despite formal laws, policies and programs, real on-ground progress is a function of implicit assumptions, gendered beliefs and cultural norms. Further, the success of policy efforts to promote real change are impacted by the extent of fiscal space, gender and care disaggregated data, regulatory mechanisms, commitment to gender mainstreaming and inter-ministerial collaborations (ESCAP, 2021c). The report makes use of the conceptual framework put forward by ESCAP that delineates four care-sensitive policy

categories — care infrastructure, care-related social protections, care services and employment-related care policies (ESCAP, 2021b). The analysis uses secondary research reports and publications from leading UN agencies such as ESCAP, UNDP, UN Women, ILO, and international organizations such as ADB and World Bank to sketch a portrait of Uzbekistan's unpaid care economy, the role of women in it, and the extent to which policies are gender-differentiated and care-sensitive. The recommendations aim to offer concrete suggestions for policymakers to further the goals of gender equality by recognizing and valuing women's unpaid care and domestic work. This would aid efforts to create a more resilient, inclusive, sustainable, and gender just economy and society.



## Section 2

# Macro socio-economic-political context

Uzbekistan gained independent status as a sovereign state, the Republic of Uzbekistan, in 1991 on the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The State began a journey of transition from a planned to a market economy, but progress was slow and often even stalled due to legacy policies and state institutions. After the election of President Mirziyoyev in 2016, a spate of modernization measures were adopted to reinvigorate economic and social growth under the Uzbekistan Development Strategy, 2017–2021 (Yusupov, 2017). A Reform Roadmap (2019–2021) outlined five main pillars of priorities: (i) maintain macroeconomic stability; (ii) accelerate market transition; (iii) strengthen social protection and citizen services; (iv) align the government's role with the needs of a market economy; and (v) preserve environmental sustainability (Izvorski and others, 2021).

Uzbekistan is located in the heart of Central Asia, one of its largest countries, both in terms of landmass and population. Though resource rich, it is doubly landlocked, which presents a unique set of environmental challenges. For example, it is one of the most energy-intensive countries in the world (Izvorski and others, 2021). Its population of 34 million is divided equally between urban and rural areas.<sup>3</sup> It has been classified as a lower-middle income country.<sup>4</sup>

Despite economic reforms, the legacy of state-led growth has resulted in weak job creation and deep structural constraints (World Bank, 2021). The lack of sufficient job creation has important effects for both men and women, young and experienced workers, as well as consequences for decent work and poverty alleviation. In 2021, 7.5 per cent of the country's population were residing below the World Bank's lower-middle income country poverty line (ibid). The rate of unemployment among women was 50 per cent higher than men at 11.6 per cent compared with 7.7 per cent for men (ILO, 2020).

The pandemic outbreak in March 2020 exacerbated inequalities, with slowing economic growth and a decline in labour income and foreign remittances (Seitz, 2021). The situation began to recover in 2021–2022 with anti-crisis fiscal measures taken by the Government, alongside strong industrial and services sector growth. For example, remittances to Uzbekistan rose by 23 per cent in the first half of 2021, compared to the same period in 2020 (KNOMAD, 2021). While cross-border activity has grown between the January and May 2022 period,<sup>5</sup> with strong capital and liquidity buffers. This may get tested under the impact of the ongoing war between the neighbouring countries of Russia and Ukraine (World Bank, 2021).

3 See demographic data by State Committee of Uzbekistan on Statistics.

4 See *The world by income and region*, World Bank.

5 See infographic of the Central Bank of The Republic of Uzbekistan.

## Section 3

# Institutional context for gender equality

Progress towards gender equality in Uzbekistan can be assessed within the broader institutional context post-independence and commitments made to various international human rights frameworks and democratic principles. Uzbekistan has signed more than 70 international conventions,<sup>6</sup> including the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action, the Millennium Development Goals 2015 and the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 Agenda. In 2014, the State Committee on Statistics launched a Gender Statistics website<sup>7</sup> to provide sex-disaggregated data across a number of economic, social, health, education, labour and social protection (ADB, 2018). The tracking of gender statistics enables a detailed assessment of gender gaps between women and men on important development outcomes.

Overall, the country ranks 106 out of 189 countries on the Human Development Index 2020 (UNDP, 2020). Advancement towards gender equality in Uzbekistan has been mixed, with the country being placed in group 3 on the Gender Development Index (indicating medium equality between women and men).<sup>8</sup> After a fall in fertility rates from 4.20 births per woman in 1991 to 2.19 births per woman in 2012, the fertility rate and number of live births are again increasing in many regions of the country. Gains in life expectancy have resulted in women outliving men by approximately 4.8 years (ILO, 2020, p. 2). Parity has been maintained in enrolment in primary and general secondary education, and since 2009, in professional colleges as well (CER, 2015). With the introduction of a 30 per cent

quota system for women candidates in political parties in 2003, female representation in parliament has increased significantly. The proportion of women holding deputy and senatorial seats in the Legislative Chamber and the Senate of the *Oliy Majlis* (parliament) is 32 per cent and 24 per cent respectively. Though the proportion of women in ministerial positions remained at 5.1 per cent, the percentage of women in managerial positions was close to 26.5 per cent in 2020 (SCS, 2022).

According to the Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations of the Republic of Uzbekistan, women's economic activity in 2020 amounted to 43.1 per cent as compared to 58.6 per cent for men. Women were concentrated in education (74.9 per cent), health care and social services (76.3 per cent), accommodation and catering services (51.7 per cent), and wholesale and retail trade (49.7 per cent) (SCS, 2021a). This points to a gender-based occupational segregation and potential for discrimination in labour market outcomes. The gender wage gap was reportedly 37.5 per cent between women and men's wages (ibid). More than 56 per cent of all employed in the economy are employed in the informal sector. The share of men is 53 per cent, and the percentage of women is 46.8 per cent. The Government has been pursuing a national strategy to enhance female employment and women's entrepreneurship. It has established centres for training women in high-demand skills, business skills, providing concessional loans, and supporting the development of business ideas. 38 per cent of firms were owned by women, up from 21 per cent in 2018 (ESCAP, 2021a, p. 9).

6 See [Ways to ensure gender equality](#).

7 See [Gender Statistics](#).

8 See [Human Development Reports, 2020, UNDP](#) Countries are divided into five groups by absolute deviation from gender parity in HDI values. Group 1 comprises countries with high equality in HDI achievements between women and men (absolute deviation of less than 2.5 per cent), group 2 comprises countries with medium to high equality in HDI achievements between women and men (absolute deviation of 2.5–5 per cent), group 3 comprises countries with medium equality in HDI achievements between women and men (absolute deviation of 5–7.5 per cent), group 4 comprises countries with medium to low equality in HDI achievements between women and men (absolute deviation of 7.5–10 per cent) and group 5 comprises countries with low equality in HDI achievements between women and men (absolute deviation from gender parity of more than 10 per cent).

These efforts to promote gender equal outcomes in the economy and labour markets are undergirded by legislative frameworks and State bodies that oversee implementation of these laws as discussed next.

### 3.1 Legislative frameworks

The Constitution of Uzbekistan protects the right of all citizens to enjoy equal rights and freedoms, irrespective of sex, race, ethnic origin, language, religion, social background, convictions and personal or social status. This constitutional basis for gender equality is reflected in a series of laws and normative legal acts that guide the public and private participation of women. Box 1 outlines some key legislations that have a bearing on women's socioeconomic and political participation in Uzbekistan.

The Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan for 2022–2026 aims to enhance women's participation in society by making it one of the strategic goals. A Presidential decree in March 2022 emphasized the need to improve the system of work with families and women, support for the *mahalla* and older generations (National Law Database, 2022). New practices to institutionally support women include, the introduction of State sponsored pregnancy and childbirth benefits to women employed in the private sector, the provision of interest-free educational loans for a period of seven years to pay for the educational contracts of girl students from vulnerable families, the allocation of 500 places in universities to admit women with seniority, 300 doctoral positions in state research institutes and universities for women, as well as the provision of subsidies and tax incentives for entrepreneurial activities (Ekip, 2022).

#### BOX 1 Normative and legal frameworks for gender equality in Uzbekistan

##### Constitutional protections

- **Article 18.** All citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan shall have equal rights and freedoms and shall be equal before law without discrimination by sex, race, nationality, language, religion, social origin, convictions, individual and social status. Any privileges may be granted solely by law and must conform to the principles of social justice.
- **Article 46.** Women and men shall have equal rights.
- **Article 63.** The family is the primary unit of the society and shall have the right to protection of the society and state. Marriage shall be based on the willing consent and equality of both parties.

**The Labour Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan** (1995) uses a protectionist approach to women's right to employment. The employer does not have the right to refuse a woman employment on the basis of her pregnancy or having many children. Chapter XIV of the Labour Code gives additional guarantees to women and persons with family responsibilities for the care of young children up to three years of age (Article 234) and children under 12 or with a disability (Article 232)

**The Family Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan** (1998) enshrines the equality of the personal and property rights of women and men in marriage (article 2) and the duties of both spouses in raising and caring for children, as well as in all other family matters (article 21).

**The Law "On elections to the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan"** (2003) provides that the number of women must be at least 30 per cent of the total number of candidates nominated by a political party. This is affirmed by the Election Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

**The Law "On Education" and the Law "On Physical Culture and Sports"** establishes equal rights of women and men to receive education.

**The Law "On guarantees of equal rights and opportunities for women and men"** dated 2 September 2019 provides for the regulation of relations in the field of ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men. For the first time, the Law provides definitions of direct and indirect discrimination based on sex.

**The Law "On Protection of Women from Oppression and Violence"** dated 2 September 2019 establishes the rights of victims of harassment and violence, and also reveals the main directions of state policy in the field of protecting women from harassment and violence.

*Source:* Gender Statistics, General Information, State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics, Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

### 3.2 Women's state machinery

The Women's Committee of Uzbekistan (WCU) is the main national state machinery for advancing the agenda of women's rights and gender equality in Uzbekistan. It was set up in 1991 as a quasi-government agency and is funded from the state budget. It oversees the design of socially oriented programs across the country and holds deputy heads of territorial administrations accountable for implementation. In this way it has played a critical role in monitoring national-level implementation of CEDAW as well as reporting on progress under the Beijing Platform for Action.

Over the years, the mandate of the WCU has shifted in line with national priorities. It works directly with women and has concerned itself with some of the following key issues: job creation and enhancement of entrepreneurial skills for women in urban areas; addressing insufficient social and municipal infrastructure and promoting the need for family- and home-based business development in rural areas (ADB, 2018). To encourage more women in leadership and decision-making roles, the WCU has generated a database of over 6,000 women-leaders who could potentially serve as candidates in parliamentary election campaigns.

A Presidential Decree in February 2018 adopted measures for "comprehensive improvement of efforts to support women and to strengthen the institution of family". This has resulted in a scientific and research emphasis on the *Oila* (family) as a central unit of a healthy society. As a result of reforms to the

work of the WCU and other state bodies and public organizations, a Commission on Gender Equality was established in 2019 in the Senate of the Oliy Majlis. The Chairman of the Senate or the Speaker of Parliament chairs the Commission as well as the Committee on Women and Gender Equality. Box 2 highlights the main aims and tasks set out for the Commission in order to dovetail and complement the efforts of the WCU.

The WCU has rolled out several key initiatives in recent years. It has expanded its focus on women needing assistance, for example women with disabilities, unemployed women, girls at risk of early marriage, female offenders and former prisoners (FAO 2019). In 2018, the WCU opened a hotline '1446' to provide urgent psychological and legal assistance for women experiencing violence. They also set up the first shelters for women who were victims of domestic violence (Solod, 2019). To increase the economic independence of women in need, the WCU has collaborated with the Public Fund for Support to Women and Families, to put in place initiatives to support women in home-based entrepreneurship (ESCAP, 2021a). Additionally, it has partnered with the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations to develop a new program that has provided employment to 13,044 women in difficult life situations, especially young women, in the first quarter of 2019 (Republic of Uzbekistan, 2019).

Other state institutions that support the rights of women are the Association of Businesswomen of Uzbekistan (*Tadbirkor Ayol*) established in 1991 with the purpose of expanding and protecting the economic and social rights of women, supporting

#### BOX 2 Focus areas for Commission on Gender

- Active participation in the implementation of state policy aimed at achieving gender equality and improving the social situation of women in the country
- Consideration of appeals of state bodies and other organizations on issues of violations of gender equality
- Implementation of measures on issues of occupational segregation, wage differences, and increase of the share of women among the economically active segments of the population
- Development of proposals for the implementation of international norms integrated into national legislation on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women
- Identify and ensure effective implementation of measures aimed at increasing the legal awareness of women, as well as organizing large-scale general awareness-raising campaigns

Source: See national report on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Uzbekistan, 2019.





Women gathering in Uzbekistan. Photo © Janarbek Amankulov / UN Women

their entrepreneurial and public initiatives, and ensuring the use of financial and information resources. The Ministry for Support of the Mahalla and Family, created in 2020, has now taken on many of the WCU responsibilities pertaining to maintaining a unified state policy to strengthen the institution of the family. This includes ensuring the effective implementation of state policy to support women, protecting their rights and legitimate interests, enhancing their role and activity in the social and political life of the country, and provision of social, legal, psychological and material assistance to women in need of assistance (SCS, n.d.).

### 3.3 Social and cultural norms

Despite the recognition of the principle of equality between the sexes in the constitutional and international commitments of the State, the cultural ethos of Uzbekistan remains traditional in its outlook towards gender roles. Most Uzbeks continue to believe that the man is the head of the family, which automatically puts women in subordinate positions. Men are charged with decision-making authority over how to spend the family income, where the children should go to school and whether the wife

may work outside the home (Solod, 2019). This automatically precludes the possibility of newer models of partnership and equal relationships, especially within the institution of marriage. The 2018 presidential decree places emphasis on the need for the institution of family to be under the protection of the state and society. Without a redefinition of the notion of family, it is likely such an endeavour would result in reinforcing existing stereotypes within the family. In a 2016 survey on perceptions around women and work, 42 per cent of women reported wanting to combine staying at home with a paid job, while 45 per cent of men reported a preference for women in their family to stay at home only (Gallup and ILO, 2017). In the absence of redistribution of care work from women to men within the household, women are likely to experience more time poverty as they increase their participation in market work alongside their unpaid care and domestic responsibilities.

The prevailing traditional gender norms, assign more of the family and care responsibilities to women, treating the home as the main site of women's work — be it paid or unpaid. This can be seen in the State's emphasis on home-based entrepreneurship as noted. About 57 per cent of women entrepreneurs operate from home, compared with 40 per cent of



men (ILO, 2020) and one in four employed women work part-time, compared to one in five employed men (ibid). Gender statistics collected by the State Committee on Statistics show that women spend 2.5 times greater number of hours on unpaid domestic work than men (SCS, 2021b). It is pertinent that this figure does not include the extent of time and effort spent by women on the care of dependents, something which is often supervisory in nature and done while multi-tasking on other types of work. These traditional role expectations emphasize the male breadwinner model and reduce women's opportunities to participate in the labour market on equal terms, diminishing their competitiveness and limiting their career choices and self-development. The male breadwinner bias has significant implications for women in the labour market, social protection legislations, public policy more generally, as well as the practices of employers and workers. Gender bias

can be noted in the occupational segregation of women into care professions like education and healthcare and a high gender wage gap.

Gender norms are generally more conservative in rural areas, especially regarding women's roles and marriageable age (ADB, 2018). The limited availability of formal sector jobs, lack of necessary job skills and fewer qualifications make women in rural areas further disadvantaged. They usually may be employed as unpaid family labour, in agriculture or in family enterprises, where they do not receive any recompense for their economic contributions. Shifting mindsets especially around the domestic and care roles and responsibilities of women in the private domain is a necessary first step in correcting gender inequities in the public sphere. The gendered nature of care work and its effects on women are discussed next.

## Section 4

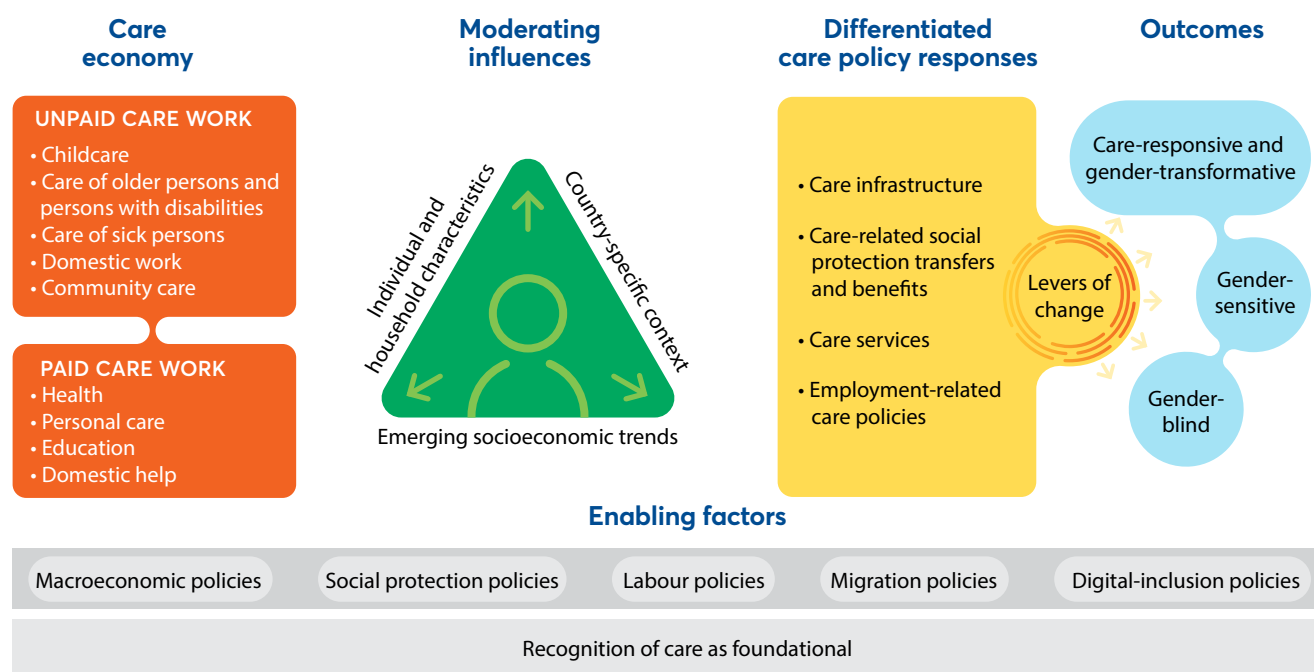
# Addressing unpaid care and domestic work

Despite Uzbekistan's constitutional commitments towards gender equality and equal rights between men and women, especially within the family, traditional gender roles and norms dictate a gendered division of labour within the home. This usually results in women bearing the larger responsibility for care work. The State Committee on Statistics has made progress in collecting sex-disaggregated data since the introduction of gender statistics in the country. From 1990, efforts have been made to focus on collecting data on various gender indicators from several sources, including administrative reports, statistical surveys, multi-indicator cluster surveys, as well as data generated by various ministries and departments.

Though large-scale time-use survey data is not available for Uzbekistan, some progress has been made in identifying the number of hours spent by men and women in paid and unpaid work. Latest figures from a 2018 sample household survey show that men and women spend 7.75 and 7.62 hours on average, respectively, on paid and unpaid work combined.<sup>9</sup> However, within this working time, women spend more than twice the amount of time on unpaid housework (5.27 hours) as compared with men who spend only 2.15 hours per day. This points to the feminization of care work and the greater onus on women to provide care within the household. A further care-disaggregation of these 5.27 hours spent by women on various care tasks would be insightful in assessing the nature and type of care tasks which take up the maximum time and effort for women. However, such fine-grained analysis is not yet available for Uzbekistan.

Women in rural areas face even more pressures on their time. For example, rural women reportedly spend considerably more time on unpaid domestic labour than rural men and even higher than urban women according to a 2007 survey data (FAO, 2019). This points to both the gendered nature of women's time use in care work and the additional challenges women in rural areas and older persons face owing to the absence of high-quality care infrastructures such as piped water, well laid roads, easy access to transportation and energy sources. The gender statistics data does not analyse women's geographical location and access to resources based on urban/rural divide at present. Given that half of Uzbekistan's population lives in rural areas, this poses a unique set of policy challenges when attempting to address the differentiated care needs of women based in rural geographical locations. Similarly, another dimension of intersecting inequalities can be seen across income class where wealthy households can afford to buy services of domestic workers, while women in low-income households must balance their paid work with their own unpaid care work (ILO, 2020).

The care-sensitive policy framework set forth by ESCAP in its recent research (ESCAP, 2021b) on the care economy (see Figure 1) takes an inter-sectional lens to women based on their multiple identities and social locations. As the figure shows, individual and household characteristics, country-specific political, socioeconomic contexts, and broader demographic and societal trends, mediate women's participation in the care economy — either in paid care or unpaid care and domestic work.

**FIGURE 1** Care-sensitive policy framework

Source: Adapted from ESCAP, 2021b, p. 14.

To comprehensively address the needs of women arising from their location along different social axes, the conceptual framework presented here proposes four, care-sensitive policy categories which together account for and address different care tasks usually performed by women. These four categories are:

- 1 Care infrastructure** — water, sanitation, energy, transport, food services, health care infrastructure for persons who are sick (HIV patients, COVID-19 patients) or living with a disability and pregnant women.
- 2 Care-related social protections** — cash transfers, cash for care, vouchers, tax benefits, non-contributory pension schemes.
- 3 Care services** — childcare, older person care and care provisions for persons with disability or illness through the State or the market.
- 4 Employment-related care policies** — sick leave, family-friendly working arrangements, flexitime, career breaks, sabbaticals, severance pay, employer-funded or contributory social protection schemes like maternity and parental leave benefits.

Factors such as living in rural areas, belonging to poor or low-income households, having a certain ethnic identity, having disabilities or being a migrant worker, change the experience of care work and the nature of support needed by women in each of these groups. As a result, policy programming must be both care-sensitive and gender-differentiated in order to effectively create gender transformative outcomes and advance the rights of women under SDG 5.4.

In addition to the four care policy categories, the conceptual framework also identifies six levers of change (discussed in more detail in figure 2) that support the implementation of these policies. The entire framework is premised on the fundamental recognition of care as foundational to human life. Further, governments must develop an enabling ecosystem through macroeconomic, social protection, digital, financial inclusion, labour market and migration policies in order to create a suitable context within which care can be addressed. The following sections examine the nature of care programs and initiatives adopted by Uzbekistan in each of the four care-sensitive policy categories.





Uzbek women around a well, Khiva, Uzbekistan. Photo © Global Water Partnership

## 4.1 Care infrastructure

Policies that foster access to water, sanitation, energy, transport, food services and health care infrastructure are labelled care policies, as they facilitate the performance of care tasks and help reduce time and effort expended by women on various household chores.

**Water supply and sanitation** — Uzbekistan being a landlocked country, lies in one of driest regions of Central Asia. The water supply infrastructure varies widely across regions and the level of service may not adequately meet the needs of a growing population (ESCAP, 2021a). Urban areas have better access to safe drinking water (93.2 per cent of the population as compared with 75.3 per cent of people in rural areas). People with access to sanitation facilities diverges even more significantly from 78.7 per cent in urban areas to 42.1 per cent in rural areas according to 2016 data (ADB, 2018). Women and girls are primary collectors, users and managers of domestic water, as well as being in-charge of family hygiene. Women in rural areas particularly spend long hours collecting and transporting drinking water several times a day. It is estimated that water delivery accounts for 22 person-hours per month on average (ibid). The absence of women in decision-making bodies in rural areas or at

policy tables, such as in the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources, means their specific challenges are not factored into policies or program design (FAO, 2019). In its national assessment of gendered policies for the Beijing+25 review, the Government of Uzbekistan identified investments in infrastructure such as access to water and sanitation to be a major issue needing attention. When infrastructure for water and sanitation is made available, it has other knock-on effects too, such as improving health outcomes for all family members thereby reducing the amount of time women spend on caring for the sick.

**Healthcare** — Reducing maternal mortality was a core objective of Millennium Development Goal 5. This resulted in many State programmes designed to increase women's access to high-quality reproductive healthcare. National targets and sub-indicators identified prenatal care among women, especially women suffering from anaemia, and aimed to decrease the number of abortions as a measure of the accessibility of family planning services (FAO 2019). The reproductive health of women remains a focus area of policy efforts through the adoption of the law "On Guarantees of Protection of Reproductive Rights" in March 2019. This aims to strengthen reproductive health services to protect the health of mothers, children and adolescents. Rural medical centres,



women's consultation units and family clinics provide support to adolescent girls and women of fertile age (ESCAP, 2021a). The Ministry of Health estimates that the maternal mortality ratio (MMR) has declined from 34.1 per 100,000 live births in 2001 to 20 per 100,000 live births in 2013 (CER, 2015). Latest data from the gender statistics division shows the maternal mortality ratio has improved even further to 14.4 in 2021.<sup>10</sup>

**Housing** — With over half the population based in urban centres and changing social dynamics where young couples want to live in nuclear households, there is an increasing demand for improved housing both in urban and rural areas. In order to enhance rural well-being, increase job creation and encourage affordability, the Government has worked with the Asian Development Bank to launch the Rural Affordable Housing Program, 2014–2020 (ADB, 2017). Other housing programmes focusing on rural areas aim to build residential estates with modern facilities such as electrical energy, gas boilers, outside toilets, hot and cold water, heating, telephone and internet access. This indirectly benefits women by reducing time and effort spent on household chores. It also encourages more women to become homeowners, though no substantive data is available to confirm an increase in women's home ownership (FAO, 2019).<sup>11</sup>

**Energy** — Reliable sources of energy are crucial for women to dispense with cooking, cleaning and other domestic chores efficiently using labour saving devices (such as washing machines, electric cooking stoves and vacuum cleaners), with minimum amounts of time and energy. While household electrification covers 100 per cent of households in Uzbekistan, there is significant disparity in the access, quality, reliability and customer experience between urban and rural settings (ADB, 2018). Households, especially in rural areas, often experience electricity shortages, voltage fluctuations and unsustainable supply and need to rely on alternative sources of energy for cooking and heating, especially as firewood becomes scarce (FAO, 2019). Employed women experience severe disadvantages due to unreliable energy availability as they must combine their household tasks with paid work. Office timings in formal sector jobs, for instance, mean that women struggle immensely to cope with finishing their household chores in the face of power cuts (ADB, 2018).

## 4.2 Care related social protections

Improvement of the social protection and health system in Uzbekistan has been identified as one of the top five priority action areas in the National Strategy of Action, 2017–2021. This includes provision of compulsory social security, strengthening of social protection for vulnerable groups, and bringing reforms to healthcare (ESCAP, 2021a).

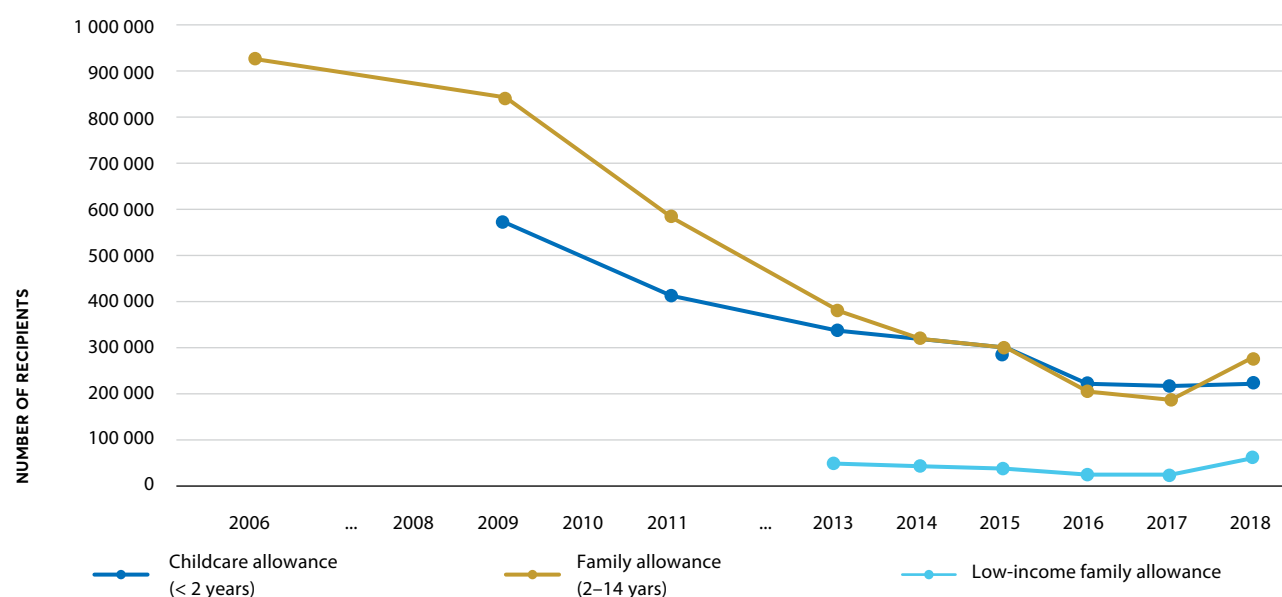
**Childcare Allowances** — There are three main kinds of childcare allowances in Uzbekistan: i) childcare allowance for non-employed mothers with a child under two years of age, ii) family allowance for families with children aged two to 14 years, and iii) child disability benefit for children up to 15 years. However, only 17 per cent of children live in households that receive child benefits, 23 per cent of 0–2 year old receive a childcare allowance and only 10 per cent of those aged 2–14 years live in households that receive a family allowance (UNICEF, 2019). This has been a result of the shift from universal benefits common in the Soviet Union era to a more targeted system of social protection after the transition to a market economy (ILO et al., 2020). Coverage has reduced because of this approach (refer Figure 2). Though women are often the primary recipients of these benefits, their inclusion serves to reinforce their maternal and childcare roles rather than support the redistribution of their care responsibilities. Moreover, exclusion errors result in 67 per cent of families being unable to access childcare allowances while 88 per cent are unable to access family allowances (UNICEF, 2019, p.23). The level of investment in child benefits has fallen from 1.6 per cent of GDP in 2011 to 0.43 per cent in 2018 which is well below the investment levels by other similar income countries like Mongolia or Argentina (UNICEF 2019).

**Child Disability Benefit** — While there has been an increase in the actual number of beneficiaries of the child disability benefit between 2013 to 2018, a study by UNICEF reports that 48 per cent of children with severe disabilities are unable to avail this benefit. The reasons for this exclusion are less well understood at present and require additional research (UNICEF, 2019). A child's disability benefit needs to factor in additional costs incurred on a child on account of their disability as well as the loss of income on the part of the caregiver of the disabled child, who are

<sup>10</sup> Gender Statistics - health care in Uzbekistan

<sup>11</sup> Property registered to women in 2016, accounted for only 22.3 per cent of the total value of property registered with the national real property registry system (ILO, 2020).



**FIGURE 2** Number of families in receipt of childcare and family allowances in Uzbekistan, 2006–2018

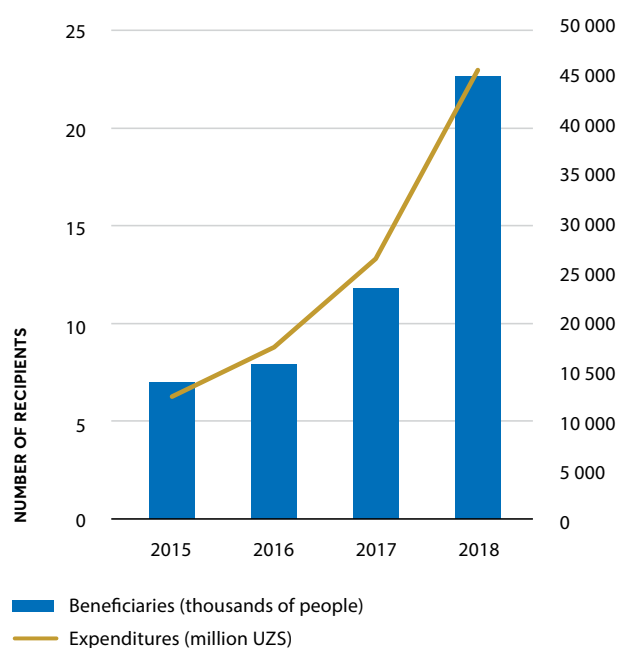
Source: ILO and others, 2020, p. 56

usually the mothers. These additional costs are often not factored into the design of the social protection scheme. A caregiver-benefit, along with assessing and understanding the unique needs of children with disabilities, must reflect in the design of a truly care-sensitive social protection scheme.

**Allowances for older persons, especially older women** — With increasing longevity, there is a rise in the population of older persons in many countries of the world. Social protections schemes including old age pensions are an important tool to enable older persons to live a life of dignity and freedom during their advanced years. Given the historical legacy of Soviet state policies, 82 per cent of the elderly population in Uzbekistan is covered by contributory old age pensions. This still implies that about one in five elderly persons lacks old age income security (ILO et al., 2020). Given women's generally greater life expectancy, women are over-represented among the population of older persons. Owing to their large participation in informal economy jobs, women are less likely to have contributory social pensions and one-third of elderly women are without old-age pension receipts (ibid).

**Disability Allowance** — This is paid to persons certified as having certain medical disabilities that may result in income loss. Benefit amounts are in line with minimum wage rates. The eligibility is determined on the basis of a health status' certificate and the size

of the benefit is determined by the medical condition of the beneficiary (ILO et al., 2020). The last few years have seen an increase in the expenditure and number of beneficiaries as shown in Figure 3. No sex-based differences have been noted in the disbursement of this disability benefit.

**FIGURE 3** Expenditure and beneficiaries of disability allowance in Uzbekistan

Source: ILO and others, 2020, p. 59

**BOX 3** Care-sensitive policy responses adopted by the Government of Uzbekistan

Policy category	Care-sensitive policy measure	Gender differentiated
Care infrastructure	Disposable facial masks, antiseptic sanitizers and antibacterial soap were added to a list of 18 essentials foodstuffs and hygiene products provided to beneficiaries of regular goods baskets. Eligible populations included older persons (men older than 60 years and women older than 55) and people with a disability who need outside care, do not have children (except for minors or people with disabilities), spouses or parents (with the exception of older persons and people with a disability) or guardians, trustees or persons entrusted by a court to provide care.	
Care services	Additional support was provided through a 10 trillion Uzbek so'm (about \$1 billion) Anti-Crisis Fund. Social assistance provisions under this fund includes covering the costs of quarantining persons at risk or in contact with infected persons.	
Care-related social protections	The duration of the childcare allowances and family allowances for low-income families was extended for six months. It had expired in March–June (and is for children until they turn 2 or 14, depending on the social allowance) (additional \$60 million). The Government approved amendments to simplify the application process and relax the income test (by disregarding certain incomes and categories) to determine eligibility to family allowances.	Y
	Effective 1 September 2020, the Government provided a 10 per cent increase in the base amount of the following benefits: allowance for persons with a disability from childhood (513,350 so'm); allowance for people with a disability and older persons without sufficient employment service for a pension (315,030 so'm). This support was expected to financially benefit 2.8 million older people and 687,000 people with disabilities. The Government also simplified the system for issuing documents on temporary disability.	
	The support to women in low-income families involved a 100 billion so'm transfer to the Federation of Trade Unions of Uzbekistan, funded from the Anti-Crisis Fund.	Y
	The one-off cash transfer (in the total amount of 580 billion so'm) supported 400,000 vulnerable households (1.7 million people). The presidential decree of 30 July 2020 provided for the allocation of one-time payments (until 15 August) to families from the Temir Daftar list. Then 160,000 additional families were included and thus receive one-time financial assistance. The list included persons with disabilities and chronic diseases; lonely and older widows and widowers and those in need of outside care; families with five or more children; individuals who lost their source of income due to quarantine measures; and vulnerable, poor and needy families.	Y
	A one-off cash assistance of 500,000 so'm (\$50) went to every child younger than 16 years in either a low-income family or a family receiving breadwinner-loss allowance or pension or if they have a disability (formal status). The purpose of the cash transfer was to help families meet the out-of-pocket expenses related to education.	Y
	Until the end of 2020, the Government gradually increased the number of households receiving three types of social benefits to reach 1 million total recipients in 200,000 families: (i) childcare allowance for kids up to age 2; (ii) benefits for families with children younger than 14; (iii) financial assistance to low-income families. A presidential decree specified that the terms of payments of benefits to mothers for childcare and families with children, which expired in July–September 2020 were automatically extended for the next six months.	Y
Employment-related care policies	If a member of the health care or medical staff is infected with COVID-19 while dealing with patients, the person receives one-off compensation of \$10,400. If the infection results in severe health damage or death, then the person or their family members receive \$26,040 as compensation	
	Termination of the employment contract for an employee who is the parent (person, substitute, guardian, trustee) of a child younger than 14 who is infected with coronavirus infection or placed in quarantine is prohibited.	Y
	Working parents (one per family) received a paid leave for the duration of schools and kindergartens shutdown without affecting the regular annual paid leave schedule.	Y
	Sick leave is normally paid at the rate of 60–80 per cent salary depending on the employment history. For the duration of quarantine, it is increased to 100 per cent of the salary for everyone and covers parents whose child is in quarantine.	Y

Source: ESCAP, 2021b, p. 38

### 4.3 Care services

The Constitution of Uzbekistan mandates parents to care for children until they are of legal age, and motherhood and childhood are protected by the state. While men and women are treated as equal in a marriage, in practice, a normative gendered division of labour dictates that the primary responsibility of childcare falls on women. The level of pre-school enrolment remains extremely low with only about 29 per cent of children aged 3 to 7 enrolled in preschools in 2017 (World Bank, 2019). The pandemic has had an adverse effect on these numbers due to lockdown measures forcing children to stay at home and intensifying the burden on women to care for children. Research on COVID-19 policy responses by governments in the Asia and the Pacific region found that Uzbekistan took the maximum number of care-sensitive measures among all North and Central Asian economies. Two-third of these measures were found to be gender-differentiated, that is they specifically addressed women's unique roles as carers. However, many of these measures were linked to care-related social protections as the main policy tool and none made provisions for access to care services during the pandemic (see [Box 3](#) for details).

#### BOX 4 Programs for care of elderly in Uzbekistan

A project titled "Improving quality of social service delivery for persons with disabilities and lonely, elderly people in Uzbekistan" was implemented jointly by the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations, Ministry of Health and UNDP Uzbekistan, in 2014. This project helped the Government improve legislation, quality of social services and social aid. A new legislation in 2015 further aimed to strengthen targeted social protection support of the elderly and people with disabilities including personalized social support for non-contributory pension fund beneficiaries. This covered food and hygiene packets along with frequent visits by care workers, a basket of daily supplies, and a more individualized approach. The project succeeded as a result of collaboration between regional and central government, national non-government organizations, private healthcare providers, and *mahallas* administrations.

Source: UNDP, 2016.

Similarly, respect of and care for the elderly of the family is a traditional social value in Uzbekistan. Able-bodied children must support their parents and are obligated for their care by the Constitution. Consequently, the Government advances provisions for the care of older persons and persons with disability only when they live alone or do not have any family caregivers. Those requiring long-term care are placed in residential care institutions.

### 4.4 Employment-related care

Building on the legacy of the Soviet Union, the public sector is still the largest employer of women in the country. 69 per cent of women and 48 per cent of men in the formal sector are employed in public enterprises. This ensures they receive good employment-linked social security benefits (ILO, 2020). Uzbekistan has ratified the ILO's Maternity Protection Convention No. 103. Women receive 126 days of leave (70 days prior to the expected birth and 56 days after, which can be extended to 70 days in case of a difficult birth). The benefit level is set at 100 per cent of the wage compensation to be borne entirely by employers. This sometimes serves as a disincentive for employers to hire women in reproductive age. However, the law specifies that women must not be discriminated against during the hiring process on grounds of pregnancy or of having many children. The Labour Code of Uzbekistan further provides for parental leave of up to three years which may be availed as an extension of the maternity leave, along with reduced working hours and part-time work options for women with young children.

To correct the perception of childcare as only a woman's responsibility, recent amendments to the Labour Code extend part-time working options- to all persons with family responsibilities and Article 234 advances provisions for parental leave which can be used in whole or in part by the child's father, grandmother, grandfather or other relative caring for the child. Similarly, persons who have adopted children are eligible for seventy days of leave (National Law Database, n.d.). During parental leave, workers' job tenure is protected from termination and the period of leave is included in calculations of continued length of service. Furthermore, women with two or more children under the age of twelve or a disabled child under the age of sixteen are entitled to additional paid leave of no less than three working days per year, and additional unpaid leave of no less than fourteen calendar days per year. These revisions of the Labour Code endeavour to incorporate gender-

neutral, family-friendly measures to support both men and women to reconcile their care responsibilities while maintaining their employment. Recognizing the care responsibilities of all workers as well as using a social insurance or publicly funded maternity leave are some ways to safeguard women's interests without causing a backlash on their labour market competitiveness vis-à-vis men. This also has the effect of encouraging men and fathers to participate more actively in the care of dependents in the family.

The Government of Uzbekistan has undertaken several measures to support women in all spheres of economic activity, particularly in the labour market. Women's unemployment has reduced, and their

economic activity in the labour market is increasing. Some benefits are provided for starting their own business. Quotas for women are being introduced for their training, and a system for free training of women at the magistracy has been introduced since the 2022 academic year. One potential policy area to be addressed in future is the lack of coverage of maternity benefits for women in the informal economy or women entrepreneurs where no employer-employee relationship exists. Absence of nurseries or childcare facilities who accept children under 3 years further complicates the demands of child rearing making it difficult for women to participate in paid work without adequate institutional care support mechanisms (Solod, 2019).

## Section 5

# Recommendations

The previous chapter captures a number of care-sensitive policies that are available to different sections of the population in Uzbekistan, even though coverage and expenditure are either low or uneven. The extent to which these policies take into account the gendered dimensions of care work and aim for a more gender equitable redistribution is important. Traditional gender norms tend to reinforce the conception of care as women's primary responsibility. Sex and care disaggregated statistics must be complemented with qualitative perspectives and voices of women in policy design and decision-making. Gendered and patriarchal assumptions within constitutional and legal mandates must be closely examined and redefined to promote gender equity. Despite the drop in poverty levels, rural populations continue to experience slower economic growth, lower standards of material well-being, and a greater degree of physical hardships on account of absent or weak infrastructure and service provisions. Climate change and its gendered impacts are another emerging issue that Uzbekistan needs to prepare for.

In the face of these challenges, ESCAP recommends member States develop structural levers of change within the country to further the agenda of gender equality through recognition and valuing of women's unpaid care and domestic work. These levers of change are summarized in Figure 4. The thrust of the six levers of change enables policymakers to not only design policies that are care-sensitive and gender-differentiated but ensure their successful on-ground implementation. This builds mechanisms and evidence that anticipate pitfalls that can weaken the effectiveness of well-intentioned and thoughtfully designed policies or programs. The following technical recommendations aim to adapt these levers of change for Uzbekistan considering the unique contours and challenges of the unpaid care economy of the country as discussed in this report.

**FIGURE 4** Levers of change to mainstream care policies



Source: ESCAP, 2021b, p. 57.

**1 Legal and regulatory frameworks** — An intent of gender equality and equal treatment between men and women is legally provided in Uzbekistan. However, there is an implicit acceptance of care as women's work within both State policy and planning as well as cultural and social practice. Changing this status quo will require the State to actively recognize the disproportionate burden of care work on women's shoulders and ensure that legal and normative frameworks value this care work. A first step is to recognize all citizens' right to give and receive care. Embedding the right to care and reviewing current laws for their care-sensitive approach could be a starting point for the Government. Affirmative action must aim to not only correct women's



disadvantages in areas like gender-based violence, health or education, but also recognize the nature of the hidden care economy. Migrant, informal care workers must especially be covered by legal frameworks that protect their rights to minimum wages and regulate decent work conditions. Such legislative commitment demonstrates a recognition and valuation of the contribution of care work to the economy. Women's central role in it must be incorporated as a crucial component of Uzbekistan's strategy towards achieving SDG 5.4.

**2 Gender-responsive budgeting** — This is a key mechanism for putting gender equality at the centre of national planning and decision-making, by allocating the necessary financial resources needed to achieve gender equitable outcomes. Despite international commitments by Uzbekistan, gender budgeting is not institutionalised across line ministries and government agencies. Uzbekistan, along with Kazakhstan in the Central Asia region, has made progress by introducing a phased implementation plan for gender budgeting in all sectors, especially in non-traditional sectors of the economy (such as industry, energy, transport, construction, ICT and finance) (ESCAP, 2021a). Still more efforts are needed in terms of capacity building of key participants in creating and implementing a gender-responsive budgetary strategy — one that accounts for both men and women's differentiated interests. For example, Uzbekistan's investment in social protection stands at six per cent of the GDP with up to 23 per cent of the population directly receiving some form of social protection benefits. However, gender roles are not considered, especially the opportunity cost of the care-taking role of women. There is no compensation provided to care givers (mostly women) of children with disabilities (UNICEF, 2020). As most beneficiaries of social protection services tend to be women with children or female headed households, weak fiscal policies and absence of gender-responsive budgeting affects women more harshly. The success of gender-responsive budgeting calls for supporting data and statistics around women's needs as critical.

**3 Sex- and care-disaggregated data** — Despite an emphasis and some concerted efforts at collecting gender statistics in Uzbekistan, by the Government's own admission, there is need for greater depth and detail on sex and care disaggregated data that can truly reflect the needs of women across policy sectors and program areas (ESCAP, 2021a). For example, data gaps exist in information concerning vulnerable groups of women, like rural women, women with disabilities, pregnant women, and older women. Often it is the older women in the

family who undertake a lot of the household chores and care of grandchildren. A lack of attention to the specific needs of different intersections of age, ethnicity, class, geographical location and life stage can result in policies that do not address the unique and differentiated needs of women at these intersections. For instance, there is limited gender-sensitive information regarding women's work in agriculture which constraints the analysis of their role and contributions compared to men. Data on living standards in rural households, social welfare, rural women's representation in agricultural businesses, access to financial and other resources, home ownership are only some of the indicative kinds of data that can be collected (FAO 2019). In addition to a focus on women's data, statistics on time use in unpaid care activities, needs of older persons, persons with disabilities, population trends and care deficit analysis of the gaps in care provisioning are needed to inform care-sensitive policy design.

Learning from the experience of other member States or collaborating with United Nations agencies to develop strong gender indicators as well as tracking progress towards SDGs could be some entry points for the Government to strengthen their data collection methodology. The State Committee on Statistics has implemented a National Strategy for the Development of Statistics 2020–2025 (NSDS) which helps identify the multiple gaps pertaining to labour and gender statistics using the ILO statistical standards for guidance. While expanding the methodology, reach of surveys, and quality of the data collected, ensuring internal comparability of statistics is another area for attention to enable policymakers to assess the progress and achievements of their policies with that of international counterparts (ILO, 2020).

**4 Norm change** — Uzbekistan is not alone in facing dilemmas of a modernizing and evolving society. Persistence of traditional sociocultural norms often result in conflicts with goals, such as gender equality which challenges traditional mindsets. The work of shifting attitudes regarding gender roles can be a deeply difficult and threatening experiencing to tackle. Embedding gender equitable norms requires acknowledging women's time poverty on account of care work and calling for its reduction. It means role modelling new ways of engaging in care — such as men doing more care, or husbands participating in household chores. There are promising practices on men's role in care from the Philippines that can be instructive.

Norm change must be reflected in both formal institutional structures as well as in informal behaviours. Revisions to the Labour Code for recognition of workers with caring responsibilities, gender equitable parental leaves policies and employer support for young children's care are some promising steps already taken by the State. However, in practice, women continue to bear the larger share of care responsibilities. Financial incentives to men to partner equally in childcare and introduction of paternity leave could be a way to enhance their contribution. Greater redistribution of care by setting up of on-site day-care facilities is another measure to change the status quo. Expanding social protection coverage and increasing the availability of institutional care services helps redistribute care work from the family or households to the State or markets. Finally, the media, be it print, television or the internet, is a powerful medium to influence public ideas on gender roles and stereotypes. The message must underscore the immense value that care work adds to society as to the economy. Media messages can reposition the importance of care seeing it as a burden but as an enormous societal value, both from a care giver and care receiver perspective.

**Whole-of-government approach** — The fragmented nature of policy making across various government ministries is often implicated in the failure of social policies to bring about desired change. Many social programs involve a number of policy actors across the Ministries of Health, Employment and Labour Relations, Women and Family Welfare, Finance and Education. In Uzbekistan, there is no designated single agency for social protection and welfare (UNICEF, 2020). At the local level, *mahallas* — local self-governing communities — manage the distribution of social benefits. However, these professionals do not possess the needed professional qualifications and do not follow any systematic approach to manage social benefits equitably. Greater inter-ministerial collaboration is required to successfully design and implement such programmes. The creation of the Ministry for the Support of the Mahalla and Family is one effort in Uzbekistan to pursue a unified state policy to strengthen the institution like family. However, it is imperative that this Ministry maintains a gender equality focus in its activities by examining entrenched ideas about family. While conservative sections of society may be opposed to questioning conservative ideas, it falls upon the Government as a whole to enable all its citizens to live lives of freedom, dignity and respect without discrimination on account of their sex, gender, race, ethnicity or other identity factors.

## Section 6

# Conclusions

After two years of facing a public health crisis at a world scale in the form of the COVID-19 pandemic, all governments are undertaking measures to build more resilient, more inclusive, more sustainable and more equitable economies and societies. Some gains made prior to the pandemic have been eroded, and uncertainties like climate change shocks, wars and internal displacements continue in many parts of the world. This moment in time presents a remarkable opportunity to create new policies and programmes that lead to transformative outcomes. The pandemic has highlighted the fundamental nature of care for human survival and wellbeing.

This report has shown the strides made by Uzbekistan in addressing the needs of its population under each of the four care-sensitive policy categories as defined in the conceptual framework of ESCAP. What is less apparent is the gendered equitable outcomes that such policies can drive by taking into account women's differentiated needs. While Uzbekistan has demonstrated its leadership in responding to COVID-19 with many care-sensitive and gender differentiated policy responses, the long-term effectiveness of these measures still needs to be assessed. The transitions to a modern market economy and a more egalitarian society are underway in the country, with much more distance to traverse.

This report has discussed the importance of expanding coverage and ensuring a gender-balanced design in policies such that a real change to women's unpaid care work responsibilities can be brought about. By

it addressing the care infrastructure gaps in rural areas, or the need to support mothers and fathers equally through care leave policies, or the need for expanded coverage by minimum social protection floors and systems for the sick, the disabled and the elderly, there is an opportunity for Uzbekistan to strengthen its care responsive policy framework in every area. This demands targeted policy design supported by gendered based statistical evidence. The establishment of the Commission on Gender Equality to complement the work of the Women's Committee of Uzbekistan is another opportune development that demonstrates the Government's commitment to furthering progress under SDG 5. The need to increase the power and influence of these institutional bodies and allow them to hold policymakers, regional and local government bodies accountable for implementation is important to ensure service delivery.

A normative commitment to recognizing care as fundamental, a policy landscape that comprehensively addresses care infrastructure, care-related social protections, care services and employment-related care policies along with an eye to the six levers of change provides the government with a detailed policy toolkit. Implementing care-sensitive and gender differentiated policies can help Uzbekistan to make rapid progress in prioritizing the unpaid care agenda. Recognizing and valuing women's work allows care to be seen as a strong contribution to society and the economy, instead of being treated as a burden or barrier to women's equality.

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