

# COUNTRY CASE STUDY Philippines





# Valuing and Investing in Unpaid Care and Domestic Work

COUNTRY  
CASE STUDY **Philippines**

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The case study report was developed through collaboration between the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) in the United Kingdom, under the overall direction and guidance of Srinivas Tata, Director of the Social Development Division with ESCAP.

Cai Cai, Chief of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Section with ESCAP, led the research team comprising Channe Lindstrøm Oguzhan, Social Affairs Officer with ESCAP, and Deepta Chopra, Research Fellow, and Meenakshi Krishnan, Research Officer, both from IDS. Meenakshi Krishnan and Deepta Chopra authored the report.

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Karen Emmons edited the report, and Daniel Feary designed the publication.

## Explanatory notes

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

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## Abbreviations

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
ILO	International Labour Organization
NEDA	National Economic and Development Authority
NSCB	National Statistical Coordination Board
PCW	Philippine Commission on Women
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

## Section 1

# Introduction

The Philippines ranks 17th in the world in terms of reducing its gender gap on various economic, political and social measures (WEF, 2021). It is the only country in Asia to make it into the top 20 of that ranking. What makes this performance more impressive is the fact that the Philippines is classified as a lower-middle-income country (World Bank, 2021b). Despite constraints on fiscal resources and developmental challenges, the Philippines has managed to close its gender gaps in educational attainment, health and survival as well as women's representation in senior managerial, professional and technical roles (WEF, 2021).

This progress, however, is undercut by the female labour force participation rate, which stands at 47.6 per cent, compared with 74.8 per cent for men (ASEAN Secretariat, 2020b). The demands of unpaid care work and home production account for more of women's time – constraining their participation in the paid market economy (ESCAP, 2021a; Abrigo and Francisco-Abrigo, 2019). The COVID-19 pandemic has further intensified the unpaid care and domestic work responsibilities of women, caused by the school closures, mobility restrictions and difficulties in food and water provisioning (UN Women, 2020).

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) initially commissioned research to assess the impact of the pandemic on the unpaid care economy in countries across Asia and the Pacific. Next, it spotlighted the role and value of women's unpaid care and domestic work among Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).<sup>1</sup> These efforts dovetailed into the ASEAN Comprehensive Framework on Care Economy, developed as a result of ASEAN governments'

resolve to put care at the centre of public policy in recovery from the pandemic efforts (ASEAN, 2021). This framework identifies strategic priority areas for a multipronged, multidimensional and multifaceted response to leaving no one behind. To strengthen the close technical collaboration between ESCAP and ASEAN on addressing the unpaid care economy in ASEAN Member States, ESCAP commissioned country-level case studies on Cambodia, Indonesia and the Philippines to develop a fine-tuned analysis of the role of unpaid care and domestic work within the larger care economy and how it must be addressed.

This case study on the Philippines documents the country's progress in addressing women's unpaid care and domestic work within the larger legislative, institutional and political economy context. Most importantly, this case study tracks the evolution of the unpaid care and domestic work agenda within national policies and the actions of women's machineries, such as the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW). Using the conceptual framework promoted in ESCAP's regional and subregional reports on the unpaid care economy (ESCAP, 2021a and 2021b), this case study highlights promising practices and forthcoming initiatives under four care policy categories – care infrastructure, care-related social protections, care services and employment-related care policies. The aim is to strengthen the case for recognizing, valuing and redistributing unpaid care work in a manner that can enable women to participate in the public life of the nation on more favourable terms.

The advance of women's economic, social and political participation by acknowledging and addressing their care work ties into Sustainable Development

<sup>1</sup> The ESCAP publication, *COVID-19 Policy Responses to Unpaid Care in Asia and the Pacific*, is available at [www.unescap.org/kp/2021/covid-19-and-unpaid-care-economy-asia-and-pacific](http://www.unescap.org/kp/2021/covid-19-and-unpaid-care-economy-asia-and-pacific) and *Valuing Unpaid Care Work in ASEAN Countries* is available at [www.unescap.org/kp/2021/addressing-unpaid-care-work-asean](http://www.unescap.org/kp/2021/addressing-unpaid-care-work-asean).





Woman medical technologist in the Philippines. Photo © Louie Pacardo / UN Women

Goal (SDG) 5 on gender equality, especially target 5.4 that seeks 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>2</sup> As the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated, care is an issue that cuts across all 17 SDGs. Whether it is the goal of no poverty (SDG 1), good health and well-being (SDG 3), access to education for girls (SDG 4), decent work (SDG 8) or reducing inequalities (SDG 10), addressing the gendered and unequal organization of care work is one of the necessary elements in encouraging women’s economic participation.

This report illustrates the case of the Philippines in tackling the multifaceted issue of women’s unpaid care and domestic work, the institutional

for action planning aimed at buttressing the ongoing efforts of policymakers and civil society actors in the country. In addition to examples of what the national and local government units are doing, relevant regional and global promising practices are showcased suitably.

Data for this report were compiled from various secondary sources published by the Government of the Philippines, United Nations agencies (including ESCAP, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Bank) and regional and other international organizations, such as the ASEAN Secretariat, the Asian Development Bank and Oxfam. Information-sharing sessions were conducted with senior officials of the PCW to understand the background and evolution of the women’s agenda

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