

CALL FOR PARTICIPATION: *G&D* Learning Project on Integrating Care into Development Practice

In November 2013, the international journal *Gender & Development* will launch its third Learning Project, focusing on Care. *G&D* is published for Oxfam by Routledge/Taylor and Francis, and is essential reading for international development researchers, policymakers and practitioners. *G&D* is currently read in over 90 countries. It is published as an online/print journal at www.tandfonline.com/gad. Content is also available free online at www.genderanddevelopment.org).

Please contact *Gender & Development* to signal your interest in participating in the Care Learning Project to the journal's Editor, Dr Caroline Sweetman, at csweetman@oxfam.org.uk, as soon as possible and before 15th October 2013.

About the Learning Project

Development and humanitarian workers are increasingly aware of the need to integrate Care into all aspects of development and humanitarian practice. Development practitioners are currently working to further these goals in advocacy and campaigning, but also by developing innovative approaches and ways of working with individuals, households and communities in the global South and North.

The *Gender & Development* Learning Project will collate, synthesise and inspire learning on Care – developing content that reflects ‘cutting-edge practice’. The Learning Project will bring together a core group of 30-40, practitioners, policymakers, researchers and activists, who have prior interest and experience to share, drawing on their first-hand research, project work or activism.

Crucially, the Learning Project will include not only well-known and high-profile participants recognised for their work on Care, but also participants who have valuable experience to share but are currently less familiar faces in these debates. **Please contact us if this is you, and you'd like to participate in our Learning Project and the Special Issue at the end of it!**

The Learning Project will consist of three key stages:

- (1) A 48 hour Electronic Discussion on **4-5 November 2013**, with invited participants, from the global South and North, who will come together as a group on the Eldis Communities website, to explore the terrain of Care as it affects (and is affected by) development and humanitarian work. (This discussion will be project managed by Ceri Hayes, Independent Consultant, in conjunction with Caroline Sweetman)
- (2) A face-to-face Learning Event in London **10-11 February 2014**, at the office of Plan UK, where participants from the Electronic Discussion will be joined by others to network, debate and ultimately develop articles for the third stage of the Learning Project: a Special Issue of *Gender and Development* to be published one year after the Project began, in November 2014.
- (3) After the Learning Event, the **Special Issue** will be commissioned and article writers will have four months to finalise their contributions.

We also anticipate many other activities and initiatives being sparked by the encounters between participants of the Project, and hope that these will result in steps forward in the task of placing Care firmly on the agenda of development practitioners, policymakers and activists in many different institutions.

Introducing the discussion

Truly 'human' development values long-term nurturing, care and affection as both ends and means of development. Investing in care has a widespread, long-term, positive impact on wellbeing and economic development, including services, infrastructure and subsidies that facilitate care. Providing adequate care for people also reduces the vulnerability of those who need and receive care. However the responsibility for and work of care is skewed to women - and by class, race, and status - across all countries, leading to significant inequality. An upcoming UN report positions unpaid care work as a significant human rights issue. In order to address this major barrier to gender equality and poverty reduction, and for women's equal enjoyment of human rights, development processes must recognise care, reduce the drudgery of care work, and redistribute responsibility for care more equitably.

Practitioners, activists and researchers encounter many challenges to making Care more visible, valued and recognised. First, it is conceptualised by society as **domestic**, and often **intimate**, in nature. Furthermore, it is **often unpaid**; and thus it is often seen as of intrinsically lesser value – and more menial - than 'productive' work. Caring for children, for older people, for the sick, and for family are considered 'natural' activities for women, and therefore considered to require little skill or effort. This is a key issue for women, since the value and nature of care work defines the social status – as well as shaping the life chances- of the women and girls who care.

In reality, care is an enormous workload which remains **shouldered disproportionately by women**, and **occurs 'invisibly'** within the home, as family members or as paid domestic workers. In addition, the outcomes of care, including wellbeing, are more difficult to measure than income or profit, and the motivations behind care are not compatible with the dominant theories of 'self-interest'. Care tasks are often **arduous**, making the gender division of labour intractable when it comes to 'persuading' men and boys to take their fair share.

In the global North, care is often performed by women from the global South, who in turn employ poorer women to replace their labour in an international 'care chain'. Woman power can be saved if labour-saving technologies – piped water, fridges, washing machines, cookers – are available, but these are available only in better-off households. When drinking water must be carried from a well, washing done by hand in buckets, and food must be processed from its raw state, **solutions are needed to reduce the drudgery and time involved in care tasks**.

Redistribution of the responsibility for care is required between women and men, and between families and the state and also employers, who benefit from families' provision of healthy, rested, nourished workers each day. Care work can, and is, commonly done outside the home in institutional settings, delivered by professionals rather than close family. This happens all over the world in hospitals, schools, daycare, nurseries and homes for the elderly – and states focusing on getting women into production may be keen to provide these facilities. But others are unable, or unwilling, to provide **affordable and accessible care facilities**, and the case must be made on both gender equality and economic development grounds for the state to try to do more. The low pay and status of the mostly female workforce employed in care parts of the labour market needs addressing to ensure **decent pay and conditions** for this socially-valuable work.

Decades of research and activism have documented problems with the current patterns of providing care of people. There is increasing visibility of the issues around care in international spaces, but development practices, strategies and approaches continue to be challenging. In the Learning Project we will explore many of these challenges *and* opportunities. Specifically, we aim to:

- Highlight new research, practice and policy initiatives on Care (in all its multiple realities and meanings in different contexts);
- Document successful approaches to changing people's understanding and attitudes about current patterns of care provision from 'this is normal' to 'this is problematic';

- Explore choices in strategies to address care in development contexts – the balance between practical interventions and addressing power relations and ‘culture’; the balance between short-term interventions and long-term processes of change;
- Working with men and mixed groups: how initiatives have made ‘care’ appealing and compelling to wider audiences;
- Examine how activists, practitioners and researchers are persuading decision-makers and donors that Care is significant, relevant, and feasible to work on, in contexts of economic and political crisis, disasters;
- Explore monitoring and evaluation of care: what is positive change in care and who decides? How might we evaluate change in private, unpaid, invisible activities with subjective, qualitative outcomes;
- Galvanise better planning, implementation, monitoring and impact assessment of policies and practices starting from a recognition of the nature and challenges of care in particular contexts and the ways care responsibilities shape the lives and options of women and girls;
- Explore how programmes, policies and legislation can be designed to reduce and redistribute the Care load (both from women to men, and from the private sphere of family to the public sphere of workplace and the state);
- Identify innovative approaches and conceptual tools that are being developed to support this process, and share these experiences and influence current and future work.

For more information on the journal visit www.genderanddevelopment.org