Care is the work that makes all other work possible

Before anyone leaves for work, someone wakes a child, prepares meals, checks on an elderly parent, or plans the day ahead. **These tasks are so routine that they often go unnoticed. Yet without them, nothing else functions.**



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So what is care work?

Care work refers to **the activities involved in looking after people.**

It is the labour that keeps households, and the people in them, going day after day.

Yet much of this work remains **unrecognised and invisible.**



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Folbre, N. (2018). Developing care: Recent research on the care economy and economic development. International Development Research Centre. https://peri.umass.edu/wp-content/uploads/joomla/images/publication/Folbre-IDL-57142.pdf

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Care can take different forms

DIRECT CARE

Hands-on, face-to-face support for a care recipient.
Examples: bathing, brushing teeth, feeding.



INDIRECT CARE

Support activities that are not person-specific.
Examples: cooking, cleaning, doing laundry.



SUPERVISORY CARE

The responsibility of overseeing and coordinating care. It is often invisible, but constant.
Examples: staying within earshot, reminders to take medicine, coordinating appointments



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Folbre, N. (2018). Developing care: Recent research on the care economy and economic development. International Development Research Centre. https://peri.umass.edu/wp-content/uploads/joomla/images/publication/Folbre-IDL-57142.pdf

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Paid or unpaid, it is still work



Care work can be paid,
done by professional carers,
or unpaid, done by family members.

The setting changes.

The labour does not.



Though it may not be recognised as such,
care work is still labour.

Different hands. Same work. Same value.



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Peng, I. (2019). The care economy: A new research framework (LIEPP Working Paper No. 89). Sciences Po, LIEPP. https://sciencespo.hal.science/hal-03456901/file/wp-89-ito-peng.pdf

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And it is not small

It was estimated that unpaid care work is worth

14.1%

of Sri Lanka's GDP

That is almost double the value of economic activity in agriculture, forestry and fisheries.



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Verité Research own estimate. Prioritizing the Care Economy for an Inclusive Sri Lanka.
https://www.veriteresearch.org/publication/prioritizing-the-care-economy-for-an-inclusive-sri-lanka/

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The point people miss

Care work is **not** outside the economy.



It is what **allows the economy to function.**





Every worker,
every business,
every public service
depends on someone, somewhere, doing care work first.

Public spending on care is not social welfare, it is social infrastructure - on which everything is built.

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BOOKMARK THIS

Save this post for the next time someone says
"care work is not "real" work."

Share it with someone whose day starts with it.

Verité Research is building out research on
the care economy in Sri Lanka.
This is the first post in that series.

Visual Note by : Apsi Sumanasiri
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