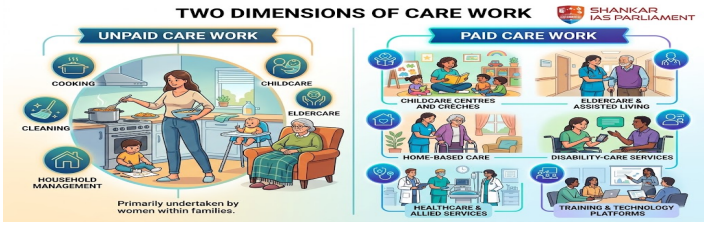
Care Ecosystem

Why in news?

Recently, the need for addressing low female labour force participation rate (LFPR) through care economy has been highlighted.

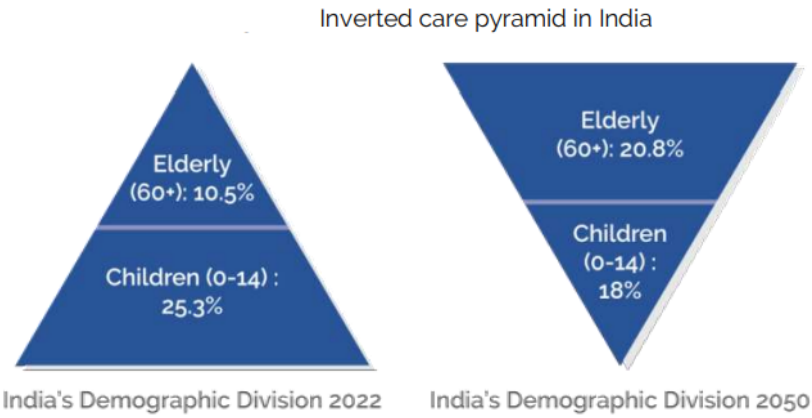
What is Care Ecosystem?

- **Care economy** – It comprises of care work, *both paid and unpaid*, and direct and indirect care, provided within and outside the household.
- **Direct Care** – These are personal, and relational care activities, such as feeding a baby.
- **Indirect care** – It include activities like cooking and cleaning.
- **Unpaid care** – These are caring work without monetary compensation.
    - For example, nursing an ill partner or cooking for a family member.
- **Paid care** — It includes those works for exchange of some form of remuneration.
    - For example, services offered by domestic workers.
- Care workers are hired directly by families or through placement agencies, nursing bureaus, hospitals, home healthcare companies, and not-for-profit organisations, among others.



Why care economy is important?

- **Protecting depending population** – It helps in addressing the demand for childcare and care for the elderly increasing in all regions.
- **Addressing demographic change** - India's demographic landscape is expected to change between 2020 to 2050, necessitating more elderly care.



- **Facilitating for demand** - The demand for external support in the form of hired caregivers is rising in urban and peri-urban areas.
- **Meeting changing societal structure** - As India's economy undergoes rapid transformation, our society is also increasingly urbanizing and nuclearizing at an unprecedented rate.
- People are moving from villages to cities and the joint family structure is being replaced by smaller nuclear entities.
- **Higher economic potential** – Investments in establishing care infrastructure and care services can unlock economic potential for India's economy
- It can create new business opportunities and can generate jobs, especially for women.

What is the status of Indian women in care economy?

- Healthy development of the care economy in India is necessary to support the primary caregivers in our society.
- Women are primary caregivers across the life course of household members.
- **Women in care economy** – As of 2022, *36.5% of females were employed as unpaid family* workers as related to 9.3% of males.
- 37.5% of FLFPR comprises of women who are not paid for the work they do, which is separate from domestic work.
- The difference between female and male unpaid family labour employment is higher in rural areas than in rban areas.
- Women aged 15-64 years *spend about three times more time daily* than men in unpaid domestic work.
- Economic value of women's unpaid domestic and care work in India ranges between *15% - 17% of GDP.*
- For women to participate in the economy, their care responsibilities need to shift elsewhere.
- **Challenges** - There are *no standardised processes* and it *lacks minimum wages, employment standards,* safety and security measures, and quality standards for care by hired workers.
- **Steps to offload women's care responsibilities**
  - Reduce unpaid family labour employment
  - Relief from unpaid domestic work
  - Reduce Domestic Care Burden

Female Labour Force Participation
• **LFPR** - Labour Force Participation Rate denotes the percentage of persons in labour force (i.e. working or seeking or available for work) in the population. • It consists of both employed and unemployed individuals, but not those who are inactive (due to education, discouragement, caring duties, retirement, disability, etc.) • **FLFPR** – It is the *percentage of women aged 15 and older* who are economically active. • It indicates how many women are part of the labour force • **FLFPR in India** - According to the Economic Survey 2023-24, the FLFPR in India was *37% (2022-23)* against a world average of 47.8% (2022). • **Recent trends** - FLFPR increa*sed from 23.3% in 2017-18 to 37% in 2022* and there is *upward trend* of female LFPR from 24.6% in 2018 to *36.6% in 2022 in rural India*.

What are the measures taken in India?

- **Anganwadi network** - Some State governments have focused on building support services through the existing Anganwadi network.
- **Increased budget allocation** - In the 2024-25 Budget, there has been a *3% increase* in the Ministry of Women and Child Development's budget for the integrated childcare and nutrition programme (Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0 scheme).
- **Community based Crèches** - Crèches for children are operational with partnership between government and non-government bodies.
- **Skilling and certification** – Various apex bodies are involved in the skilling and certification of different cadres of care workers.
    - Home Management and Care Givers Sector Skill Council (earlier Domestic Workers Sector Skill)
    - Healthcare Sector Skill Council
    - National Skill Development Corporation
- **International coordination** - The ILO Resolution on Decent Work and the Care Economy was adopted by the International Labour Conference during its 112th Session, in June 2024.
    - *G20 Bali Care Economy Dialogue*, have provided comprehensive recommendations to governments.
- **Delhi Declaration** – It was prepared under India's leadership of G20 in 2023 that calls upon the G20 countries to
    - *Promote investment* in the availability and accessibility of social protection, and to affordable care infrastructure
    - *Address the unequal distribution* in paid and unpaid care and domestic work
    - *Promote the continued participation of women* in education and employment

What lies ahead?

- Formulate a comprehensive policy to define the care ecosystem from a life course perspective.
- Review the existing models of Community based Creches for replicability, financial sustainability, and scalability.
- Develop a more widespread network of creches suitable to the local context and populace is required in rural, tribal, and urban areas to facilitate the participation of women in the workforce.

- Developing a needs-based assessment of the mix of care services required across age groups, socio-economic status, and geographies.
- Address the gap in the training, skilling, and certification of a mix of care workers.
- Map supply-side actors and institutions including the public, private, and non-profit sectors.

References

1. The Hindu | India needs to develop a care ecosystem
2. PIB | India's Care Economy

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