

Women's Unpaid Care Work in Conflicts and Crisis: Evidence from Myanmar

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Abstract

Unpaid care work is daily labor that keeps households, families, and communities running, which is predominantly done by women and girls. Although care work remains fundamental in sustaining communities, it is often invisible in social and economic contexts. During the pandemic and conflicts, women's caring responsibilities increased and reinforced greater socio-economic inequality. In Myanmar, women are filling the gaps in public services and institutional support by offering unpaid care services such as childcare, elderly care and health care to households and communities. This situation clearly reveals the importance of care work, particularly in crisis settings, and how existing systems are heavily dependent on the labor of women. Unequal distribution of responsibilities exacerbates a gender gap in care work by limiting women's opportunities, particularly in education and formal employment. Despite the growing global discussion around gender injustice in care, the impacts of women's unpaid care burden in crisis settings are rarely explored. Thus, the study aims to examine how conflict situations have shaped women's unpaid care work, with particular focus on the post-coup context in Myanmar. Using a feminist lens of care and social reproduction theory, this paper will employ a qualitative research method to explore women's evolving care roles in conflict settings. Study will utilize a narrative literature review and thematic analysis to synthesize existing research, including academic publications, reports, and studies on unpaid care work in conflict settings. Through systematic review and coding of the literature, research aims to identify recurring themes related to the intensification of care responsibilities, the role of women in sustaining households and communities during crisis, and the resulting impacts on women's lives. Following the analysis, policy recommendations will be provided to advocate for care reform in present and future Myanmar.