Women's Economic Empowerment and Early Childhood Care and Development - Analysis of Secondary Data from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE)
RESEARCH TEAM AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Report constitutes one of the products of the overall research project: "Women's Economic Empowerment and Early Childhood Care and Development".

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We wish to thank the World Bank Group for making the data sets available to the research team, for the production of this report.
Women's Economic Empowerment and Early Childhood Care and Development - Analysis of Secondary Data from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE)

Background to the study

This report analyzes secondary data derived from the World Bank surveys conducted in 2014 in 4 CEE countries: Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Ukraine (World Bank 2014). The World Bank study focused on demand and supply assessments of both childcare and eldercare service provisioning in three types of locations in these countries: urban, small town, and rural. Service providers from both formal and informal institutions were studied. Consistent with the theme of the broader UNICEF research project on women's economic empowerment and early childhood development of which this report forms a part, we analyze only the data on childcare services and their use by mothers of children under 7 years old. This represents a sub-sample of 139 women from a total of 430 observations. (Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Armenia</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macedonia</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of women, 74% of the sub-sample, care for 1 child under 7, while 20% care for 2 children under 7, and 6% care for 3 children. (Table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Children</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>139</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mothers' Use of Formal and Informal Childcare

The age range of the women in the sample was 23-65 years, with a median age of 34 years, (Figure I), indicating a sample of women experiencing all of the challenges of combining the activities of their productive and reproductive lives. The majority of women with children under 7 make use of informal childcare (83%), (Figure II). However, many women combine informal arrangements with formal childcare. (Refer to Box I for definitions of formal and informal childcare used in the study).

**Box I: Definition of Formal and Informal care**

- **Formal care** is defined as paid care provided in a formal institutional setting such as a day-care centre, kindergarten, or pre-school setting outside of the home. Formal care is regulated by a contractual agreement.
- **Informal care** is defined as unpaid, unregulated care, provided for the most part by family members.

**Figure I:**

![Age distribution - sample of 139 women](image)
Figure II: Use of Informal childcare, (relatives or friends), by the sample of women
Sixty six women, close to half the sample, (49%), make use of formal childcare (Figure III). The majority of this group, (57 women) combine formal childcare with the use of informal childcare. The remaining 9 women do not combine formal childcare with informal arrangements, indicating that they are taking care of their children themselves. (Table 3).

**Figure III: Use of formal childcare by the sample of women**

![Figure III: Use of formal childcare by the sample of women](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of care</th>
<th>Number of Women</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal supplemented by informal</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal supplemented by direct care</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal care only</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct provided care only</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>135</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sixty nine women, a little over half the sample, (51%- Figure III), do not use formal childcare. The majority of this group (55), use informal care exclusively, while a small number, (14 women), use neither formal nor informal care; that is, they care for their children themselves. (Table 3). Thus the pattern emerging is that a large number of women, close to half of the sample, use formal childcare, supplementing this care...
either with informal care or providing the care themselves, while somewhat less than half the sample relies exclusively on informal childcare, and a small number use no childcare facilities at all. (Table 3)*.

Where women report using informal childcare, this is provided overwhelmingly by the partner or spouse. (76% of women using informal care). Ten percent of women reported that they receive this help from mothers, while smaller percentages report receiving this help from other relatives or from an older child. (Figure IV).

**Figure IV: Who Provides Informal Care (percent)**

The critical nature of childcare needs emerges clearly from the analysis. Many women are using formal care combined with informal care, as there is a need for more hours of childcare than those provided in the formal setting, or because the use of more hours of formal care would be too costly.

Women in urban and semi-urban locations make greater use of formal childcare than women in rural areas, (Figure V), and this is largely due to availability of childcare centres. Childcare services are reportedly very sparse, sometimes non-existent, in rural areas. The data also indicate a relatively high percentage of women accessing formal child care centers in small cities or towns, and we note a clear association between women's employment and the use of formal childcare (Figure VII). The relevant literature also confirms that formal childcare services are used by women working full-time or part-time in the CEE region1.

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*For 4 of the 139 respondents, no data were provided on use of formal and informal childcare.

1 World Bank 2015
Figure V: Use of Formal Care among the sample of women, by geographic location

Type of Formal Care
- No
- Yes, from a private individual NOT at m.
- Yes, from a private, formal institution (s..)
- Yes, from a state, formal institution (suc..)
- Yes, from an informal institution, such a..
- Yes, from another institutional or paid a..

Rural
- No: 66%
- Yes, from a private individual NOT at m.: 31%
- Yes, from a state, formal institution (suc..): 3%

Small city/town
- No: 50%
- Yes, from a private individual NOT at m.: 3%
- Yes, from a state, formal institution (suc..): 42%
- Yes, from another institutional or paid a.: 2%

Urban
- No: 39%
- Yes, from a private individual NOT at m.: 5%
- Yes, from a state, formal institution (suc..): 54%
- Yes, from another institutional or paid a.: 2%
Formal childcare and women's employment

**Figure VI: Distribution of Working Women by Industrial Sector**

Figure VI presents the distribution of working women by industrial sector. A little over 71% of working women in the sample are employed in the public and private services sectors (administration & services, education, health, finance & insurance, hotel & restaurant). Of these services sectors, education is the largest employer (26%), followed by administration & services (21%). The sectoral distribution of working women in urban areas roughly parallels the overall distribution. For small towns, the education sector employs close to half of all working women, while the public and private services sectors are important employers. For rural areas, administration & services are by far the largest employer of working women, followed by health, financial services, and the hotel & restaurant sector. Surprisingly, the education sector does not appear to be a notable employer of women in the rural areas. Overall, in urban areas, employment was more diversified compared to rural areas.
A Desk Review produced in the context of the broader research project provides clear evidence of the positive associations between maternal employment and the use of formal childcare. The demand for childcare services is high among working women, while affordable, accessible childcare is a strong enabler of women's employment. Moreover, women's employment status has been shown to be clearly linked to decisions and choices concerning childcare. Often, women reduce their working hours or withdraw from the labour market altogether, because of childcare responsibilities.

Similar patterns are evident for the group of countries studied here. For the sample of women in the CEE region, we see that many of those making use of formal childcare are employed. (Figure VII, right-hand columns). This represents 24% of the total sample, of which 20% are waged employees, while 2% are self-employed, and 2% are engaged in social work. In addition, if we assume that women on maternity leave (2%), and those officially registered as unemployed (7%), have not withdrawn from the labour market and can be counted as labour force participants, we may conclude that 33% of women in the sample are engaged in the labour market, and are relying on formal childcare for the support they need in addressing their childcare responsibilities, supplemented by informal care or directly provided care, as we have seen from Table 3. The data suggests, however, that there is a positive association between formal child care and women’s employment.

Using the same assumptions about labour force participation, a slightly higher percentage of women, 36%, are engaged in the labour market and not using formal childcare, with most of them relying on informal care, as we have seen from Table 3. (Figure VII, left-hand columns). Informal care arrangements may be a preferred option because of the high cost of formal childcare, or because of the flexibility it offers in balancing work with childcare responsibilities while relying on a spouse, relative, or older child to lend their support in meeting childcare needs. Also, a large proportion of those opting for informal childcare are unemployed (18%), or looking after the home (15%). The imperative to participate in meeting care needs in the home may have determined or constrained their choices. Structural unemployment is also reportedly an issue for the region, and the high unemployment rate among this group of women may be a reflection of the unfavourable labour market situation.

The pattern that emerges overall is that women who are formally employed and those remaining in the labour market have a clear need for, and are using formal child care. The positive relationship between employment and use of formal childcare is evident from the analysis.

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**Figure VII: Relationship between Formal childcare and women's employment**

No, does not make use of formal childcare

Yes, makes use of formal childcare
89 women from the sample reported that they had stopped working. For almost half of this group, unemployment status was linked to their reproductive roles and care responsibilities. Forty-eight percent of the women reported that they had stopped working for reasons of pregnancy or to take care of a child. (Figure VIII). It is evident that reproduction and childcare responsibilities are a major determinant of women's life choices, in particular, decisions about engaging in or disengaging from the labour market, which at best is challenging. We see that many of the unemployed actually got laid off and were unable to find a new job. (34%). Thus lack of access to jobs is clearly an issue for many women who do want to work.

**Cost of Formal Childcare**

For a sizeable proportion of the group of 68 women that pay for formal childcare, (43%), less than 10% of household income goes to paying for childcare. (Figure IX). For 19% of the group, 10% to 20% of household income goes to paying for childcare. Twenty five percent of the group does not pay for childcare, indicating that for this sub-group, childcare is fully subsidized. According to the background literature for the region, many providers offer discounts to low-income families (World Bank 2015), and this group is most probably benefitting from such arrangements.
Conclusions

The present report analyzes secondary data derived from World Bank surveys conducted in 2014 in 4 CEE countries: Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Ukraine (World Bank 2014). It focuses, in particular, on women's employment status linked to their childcare needs and choices. The critical nature of childcare needs emerges clearly from the analysis. Thirty-three percent of women in the sample engaged in the labour market are relying on formal childcare for the support they need in meeting their childcare responsibilities, albeit supplemented by informal care arrangements or directly provided childcare. A slightly higher percentage, (36%), are engaged in the labour market and relying, for the most part, on informal care. Childcare needs are nonetheless critical for these women, and the choice of the majority of them to make use of informal rather than formal care is no doubt determined by the high cost of childcare, or by the greater flexibility offered by informal childcare arrangements, allowing them to resolve conflicts between work and childcare responsibilities. The conclusions of our analysis align with those of the broader research project on women's economic empowerment and early childhood care and development⁴, showing that the demand for childcare services is high among working women, while affordable, accessible childcare is a strong enabler of women's employment.

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⁴ UNICEF 2016
References


