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Investing in Care in Emerging Economies – Jobs and Inclusive Growth

Brussels, 18 January 2017 (ITUC OnLine): A new ITUC report <https://www.ituc-csi.org/CareJobs> released today shows the potential for jobs and economic growth of investing in care and physical infrastructure in emerging economies. Investment of 2% of GDP in these two sectors would generate economic growth of up to 3.2% and create more than 40 million new jobs. While the analysis shows some differences between the six countries studied – Brazil, China, Costa Rica, India, Indonesia and South Africa – the results are in all cases a major boost to employment and the economy overall, and would contribute to meeting key Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

A 2016 ITUC study of seven OECD countries, also produced by the authors of this report, the Women's Budget Group, <http://www.wbg.org.uk/>, showed that investment of the same percentage of GDP would increase overall employment by between 2.4% and 6.1% depending on the country, with the majority of the jobs taken up by women, and provide a further stimulus to male employment from this of up to 4%.

Sharan Burrow, ITUC General Secretary, said: “The G20 has committed to increase women’s employment, and the results of these two reports show that investing in care not only achieves this, it also unlocks the economic potential of millions of women who can’t access employment because they have to do unpaid care work for elders, children and the sick. The world desperately needs investment in both physical infrastructure and care, to meet pressing needs of ordinary people, to create jobs and to stimulate GDP growth at a time when economies are increasingly stagnant. The social benefits of better health, education and childcare provision speak for themselves. We’re hearing more talk from governments about infrastructure investment, but with little real action on physical infrastructure and almost no action either on the care economy. The evidence is in, and talk needs to turn into action.”

The report also focuses on the impact of gender bias in economic thinking, citing the United Nations System of National Accounts, a key economic tool, as an example. While spending on physical infrastructure which employs mainly men is seen as an investment, care spending which creates jobs mainly for women is seen as a cost.

“The report shows how outdated economic assumptions can be a real barrier to tackling economic and social problems, and it is high time that these old assumptions are thrown out and replaced by up-to-date thinking,” said Burrow.

To read the report and to read the 2016 care economy report: <https://www.ituc-csi.org/CareJobs>

The ITUC represents 181 million workers in 163 countries and territories and has 340 national affiliates.

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