

A black and white photograph showing several hands reaching towards a cluster of interlocking plastic gears on a dark wooden surface. The hands are positioned around the gears, with fingers pointing or touching them, suggesting a collaborative activity or a shared task. The lighting is soft, highlighting the textures of the wood and the plastic of the gears.

SHARING CARE, SHARING OPPORTUNITIES

PRACTICAL ACTIVITY

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THEMATIC AREA

Sharing Care, Sharing Opportunities

ACTIVITY TITLE AND INTRODUCTION

Case Study:

This case study explores how sharing caregiving responsibilities within families and communities can lead to greater gender equality, improved well-being and expanded social and economic opportunities for all members.

Background:

In many households, caregiving responsibilities including child-rearing, elderly care, and household management are disproportionately placed on women. This imbalance often limits women's access to career advancement, education, and personal development. A pilot initiative in Bologna, Italy, set out to test a new community model promoting equal caregiving roles within families and shared solutions within neighborhoods.

Description:

The initiative created “Care Circles,” groups of 5–7 families who shared resources such as childcare duties, transportation to school, meal preparation, and elder support. Within families, couples were encouraged to divide caregiving tasks equally. Local employers were also involved by offering flexible working hours for both mothers and fathers.

Educational workshops were held to challenge traditional gender roles, and the municipality offered incentives to families demonstrating shared caregiving practices.

PHOTO



DURATION OF ACTIVITY (IN MINUTES)

Between 60-75 minutes

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this case study, students will be able to:

- Understand caregiving dynamics
- Analyse social and economic impacts
- Explore gender equality in caregiving
- Apply problem-solving and collaboration

AIM OF THE ACTIVITY

Gender-equal caregiving is essential to fair opportunity. Strengthening shared family responsibilities improves work-life balance, reduces structural barriers, and enables both men and women to participate fully in economic and social life. Advancing this shift supports healthier families, more resilient workplaces, and a more inclusive society, in other words the aim is to:

- Promote gender equality in caregiving roles
- Improve work-life balance for both men and women
- Reduce economic and social barriers to opportunity caused by unequal caregiving burdens

MATERIALS REQUIRED FOR ACTIVITY

- Individual worksheets for daily-routine mapping
- Pens or fine-tip markers
- Sticky notes for highlights or pain points
- Flipchart paper or a whiteboard for synthesising insights
- Timer or phone stopwatch to keep each phase structured and consistent

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

Case Study Practical Activity: Care Circles in Bologna

1) Welcome & frame 5 minutes

Discuss the objective: We'll analyse a real community model and design practical ways to share care fairly

2) Personal quick reflection 3 minutes

3) Read the case (see description) and ask general questions, from 3-5 examples: (10 minutes)

1. How does unequal caregiving affect access to education, employment, and personal development—especially for women?
2. What are the long-term benefits of equal caregiving for children, parents, and society?
3. What cultural or social norms may resist this shift, and how can they be addressed?
4. How can policy support and workplace flexibility help normalise shared caregiving?
5. Could “Care Circles” work in your community? Why or why not?

Divide participants in 2 groups 30 minutes

Group Task A – Impacts of Unequal Caregiving

Discussion Question:

How does unequal caregiving affect access to education, employment, and personal development—especially for women?

Instructions for Group A:

1. Brainstorm ways unequal caregiving burdens limit opportunities (education, jobs, self-growth).
2. Discuss real-life or community examples.
3. Summarise your findings on chart paper under three headings:
 - Education
 - Employment
 - Personal Development
4. Prepare to present your key points to the class.

Group Task B – Designing an Equal Care Plan

Instructions for Group B:

Care Circles Idea

- Imagine 5–7 families share childcare, school runs, meals, elder support.
- Employers provide flexible hours for both men and women.

Weekly Caregiving Schedule

- Draft a schedule for one family.
- Show who does what and when (parents, children, extended family).
- Add Care Circle supports (rotating school runs, shared meal prep, elder check-ins).

Employer Actions

List at least 3 actions employers can take, such as:

- Core working hours for everyone
- Equal parental leave uptake
- Remote working days

Municipal Supports

List local/community supports, such as:

- Incentives for shared caregiving
- Caregiving workshops
- Community spaces for child/elder care

Output:

Prepare a poster or chart showing the family schedule, employer actions, and municipal supports.

Wrap-Up (Whole Class) 20 Minutes – each group 10 minutes

1. Group A presents their analysis of the impacts of unequal caregiving.
2. Group B presents their Equal Care Plan.
3. The teacher/facilitator highlights:
 - How unequal caregiving limits women's opportunities.
 - How equal care benefits families, employers, and society.

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