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NITI Aayog Proposes Comprehensive Caregiving Ecosystem to Strengthen Human Capital and Realise Viksit Bharat@2047 Vision

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Recent Developments:

- NITI Aayog has released the report "**Reimagining Care: Strategies for Empowering Caregivers in Viksit Bharat@2047**", presenting a comprehensive roadmap to professionalise India's caregiving ecosystem through policy reforms, skill development, technology integration, institutional strengthening and global partnerships.
- The report recommends establishing a **National Policy on Caregiving**, a **National Caregiver Council (NCC)**, nationally standardised caregiver certification and stronger social security while positioning India as a global hub for skilled caregivers amid rising domestic and international demand for long-term care services.

About the NITI Aayog Report:

Overview:

- The report presents a long-term strategy to transform caregiving into a recognised professional sector capable of generating employment, improving quality of care and strengthening India's human capital.
- It identifies caregiving as an important pillar for achieving **Viksit Bharat@2047** by addressing demographic transition, expanding the care economy and promoting inclusive development.
- The report advocates integrating caregiving with healthcare, skill development, social protection, digital governance and international labour mobility.

Objectives:

- Build a professional and future-ready caregiving workforce.
- Improve accessibility and quality of long-term care services.
- Reduce the burden of unpaid caregiving.
- Enhance women's economic participation.
- Position India as a global supplier of skilled caregivers.

Why India Needs an Organised Caregiving Ecosystem:

Managing Demographic Transition:

- India is experiencing rapid population ageing, with the population aged **60 years and above** projected to increase from **149 million** in **2022** to nearly **347 million** by **2050**, accounting for approximately **20.8%** of the total population.
- The growing prevalence of chronic diseases, dementia, disability and age-related illnesses is significantly increasing demand for geriatric, palliative, home-based and long-term care services.

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- Nearly **10%** of India's population currently serves as family caregivers, most of whom remain untrained and unpaid.

Addressing the Global Care Deficit:

- Ageing populations and workforce shortages are creating an unprecedented global demand for professional caregivers.
- According to the **World Health Organization (WHO)**, the world could face a shortage of nearly **11 million** health workers by **2030**.
- **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)** countries are expected to require nearly **13.5 million** additional care workers by **2040**, creating significant employment opportunities for India.

Harnessing the Care Economy:

- The **World Economic Forum (2024)** estimates that the care economy accounts for nearly **16%** of global employment.
- Unpaid care work contributes approximately **USD 11 trillion** annually to the global economy without formal economic recognition.
- India's care services market is projected to grow from **USD 29.62 billion** in **2023** to **USD 72.31 billion** by **2030**, indicating substantial employment and investment potential.

Promoting Women's Economic Empowerment:

- Women perform a disproportionately large share of unpaid caregiving responsibilities in India.
- According to the **National Statistical Office (NSO) Time Use Survey 2024**, **41%** of women aged **15–59** participated in caregiving activities compared with **21.4%** of men.
- Women spent approximately **140 minutes** daily on caregiving compared with **74 minutes** by men, highlighting the gendered nature of unpaid care work.
- Formalisation of caregiving can reduce unpaid work, improve female labour force participation and create dignified employment opportunities.

Strengthening Demographic Dividend:

- Professionalising caregiving can transform India's large working-age population into a globally competitive skilled workforce.
- Expanding caregiving skills can simultaneously address domestic social needs and international labour market demand.

Enhancing Global Competitiveness:

- Countries such as **Japan, Germany, United Kingdom** and several **OECD** members are experiencing rapid population ageing.
- Standardised caregiver training and ethical international mobility pathways can strengthen employment generation, remittance inflows and India's global soft power.

Promoting Inclusive Growth:

- A structured caregiving ecosystem can improve access to quality care for elderly persons, **Persons with Disabilities (PwDs)** and other vulnerable groups.
- The report also promotes the **Purple Economy** by encouraging trained **Persons with Disabilities** to participate as professional caregivers.

Care Economy:

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Meaning:

- The **Care Economy** comprises both paid and unpaid activities that support health, well-being, independent living and human development.
- It includes caregiving delivered through households, public institutions, private enterprises, **Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)**, non-profit organisations and community-based institutions.
- Professionalisation of caregiving can increase productivity, create skilled employment and contribute to long-term economic growth.

Constitutional Basis:

- **Article 41** of the **Constitution of India** directs the State to provide public assistance in cases of old age, sickness, disability and other vulnerable conditions.
- Professional caregiving also advances the constitutional objective of promoting the right to work and social justice.

India's Existing Caregiving Ecosystem:

Department of Social Justice and Empowerment (DoSJE):

- Implements the **PM Special – Training of Geriatric Caregivers** programme.
- Operates the **SHATAYU Dashboard** and **JEEVAN App** to strengthen elderly care services.

Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD):

- Conducts the **Certificate Course in Caregiving (CCCG)** through the **Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI)**.

Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW):

- Implements the **National Programme for Health Care of the Elderly (NPHCE)**.
- **National Commission for Allied and Healthcare Professions (NCAHP)** regulates allied healthcare professionals.
- **National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS)** provides specialised training in geriatric and dementia care.

Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), Ministry of External Affairs (MEA):

- Promote **National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF)** aligned caregiver certification.
- Support international **Government-to-Government (G2G)** mobility programmes and **Pre-Departure Orientation Training (PDOT)** for overseas employment.

State-Level Innovations:

- **Karnataka** provides a **Carer's Monthly Allowance Scheme** and supports caregivers through **Self-Help Groups (SHGs)**.
- **Kerala** has introduced **K4Care, Aswasakiranam, Neighbourhood Network in Palliative Care** and the **Triple Win Programme** with Germany.

Care Economy, Silver Economy and Purple Economy:

Care Economy:

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- Encompasses paid and unpaid care provided to children, elderly persons, sick individuals and **Persons with Disabilities**.

Silver Economy:

- Refers to economic activities related to goods and services demanded by or designed for the ageing population.

Purple Economy:

- Promotes active participation of **Persons with Disabilities** as productive contributors, including as trained caregivers, rather than viewing them only as welfare beneficiaries.

Care Economy and Monetised Economy:

Key Differences:

- The **Care Economy** largely consists of unpaid, invisible work that is generally excluded from **Gross Domestic Product (GDP)** estimation.
- The **Monetised Economy** includes market-based production of goods and services that directly contributes to **Gross Domestic Product**.
- Care work primarily supports human well-being and human capital formation, whereas the monetised economy focuses on market transactions.
- Care work is predominantly performed by women and receives limited legal recognition, contractual protection and social security compared with formal employment.

Key Recommendations of NITI Aayog:

National Policy on Caregiving:

- Formulate a dedicated **National Policy on Caregiving** to formalise the caregiving sector and strengthen Centre-State coordination.

National Caregiver Council (NCC):

- Establish the **National Caregiver Council (NCC)** as the apex institution responsible for accreditation, certification, caregiver registry, grievance redressal and standard setting.

Professionalise the Workforce:

- Introduce **NSQF**-aligned certification.
- Develop nationally standardised curricula.
- Create specialised caregiver cadres for geriatric, palliative and dementia care.
- Integrate caregiving modules into education and digital learning platforms.

Promote Global Mobility:

- Expand ethical **Government-to-Government (G2G)** partnerships with countries such as **Japan, Germany, United Kingdom** and **Australia**.
- Strengthen language training, international certification and reintegration mechanisms for returning caregivers.

Strengthen Institutions:

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- Enhance the capacities of **Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI)**, **National Institute of Social Defence (NISD)**, **Sector Skill Councils**, **National Centre for Ageing** and **Regional Geriatric Centres**.
- Standardise caregiver training across institutions.

Extend Social Security:

- Provide caregivers with health insurance, accident insurance and social security under the **Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act, 2008**.
- Promote caregiving entrepreneurship through **Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana** and **Startup India**.

Support Family and Community Care:

- Reduce unpaid caregiving burdens by strengthening family caregivers, **Self-Help Groups (SHGs)**, **Ayushman Arogya Mandirs** and **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)** supported community initiatives.

Improve Caregiver Welfare:

- Introduce statutory care leave.
- Expand respite-care services.
- Promote workplace sensitisation and counselling support to reduce caregiver burnout.

Leverage Technology:

- Develop a **National Digital Caregiver Portal** with caregiver registry, background verification, multilingual digital learning and technology-enabled service delivery.

Global Best Practices:

Japan:

- Operates **Long-Term Care Insurance (LTCI)** and dedicated visa pathways for trained caregivers.

Australia:

- Provides nationally standardised caregiver training, certification and digital dementia-care modules.

China:

- Integrates **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** and robotics into elderly care while developing international standards for elder-care robots.

Sweden, Denmark:

- Follow a shared responsibility model involving the State, families, communities and private sector for comprehensive care delivery.

Way Forward:

Priority Measures:

- Establish a comprehensive national caregiving policy supported by uniform regulatory standards.
- Expand professional caregiver training linked with international quality benchmarks.
- Integrate caregiving with healthcare, social protection, digital governance and skill development programmes.
- Promote ethical international mobility through structured **Government-to-Government (G2G)** partnerships.

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- Strengthen institutional capacity, technology adoption and financial support for caregivers.
- Recognise caregiving as productive economic activity contributing to human capital, gender equality, employment generation and inclusive development.

Value Addition for UPSC:

Important Facts:

- **Report: Reimagining Care: Strategies for Empowering Caregivers in Viksit Bharat@2047.**
- **Released By: NITI Aayog.**
- **Constitutional Basis: Article 41, Directive Principles of State Policy.**
- **Projected Elderly Population (2050): 347 million (20.8%).**
- **Global Health Worker Shortage (WHO): Nearly 11 million by 2030.**
- **Additional Care Workers Required in OECD Countries: 13.5 million by 2040.**
- **Care Economy Share in Global Employment: Approximately 16%.**
- **India's Care Services Market: USD 29.62 billion (2023) to USD 72.31 billion (2030).**
- **Core Institutional Recommendation: National Policy on Caregiving, National Caregiver Council (NCC) and National Digital Caregiver Portal**