



Making Better Planning Decisions **in a Changing Demographic Context**

Technical ministries are responsible and accountable for translating development priorities into plans, budgets, and investments that shape national development outcomes. They make decisions about how public resources are allocated, which needs are prioritized, and how investments can best support economic and social development. These decisions influence the quality and accessibility of services, the effectiveness of public spending, and countries' ability to achieve their development objectives.

This task is becoming increasingly complex. Rapid demographic change, growing demand for services and infrastructure, evolving labor market dynamics, and persistent fiscal constraints require ministries to balance immediate priorities with long-term development needs. Responding effectively to these challenges requires evidence and analytical tools that

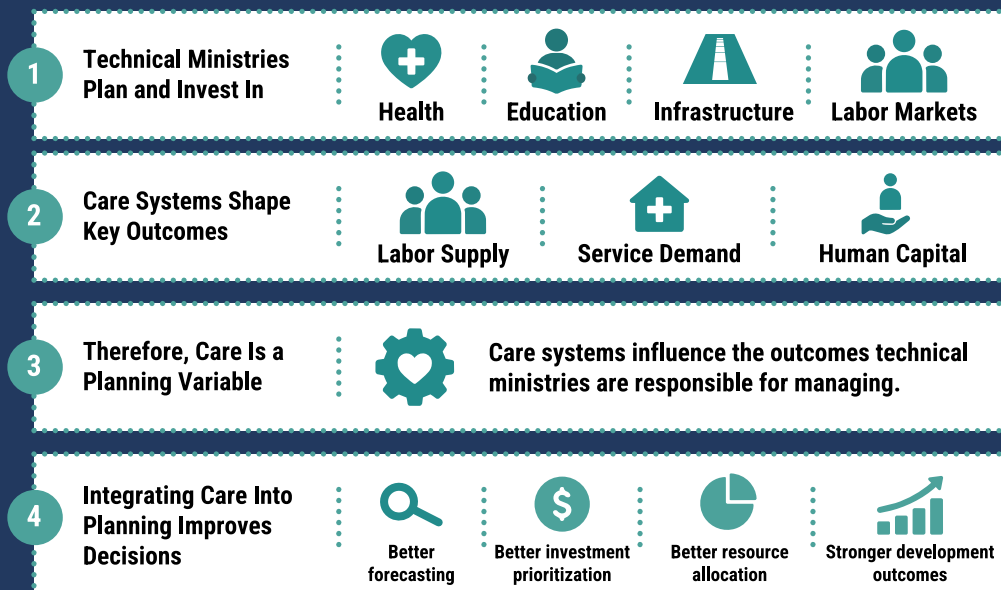
help anticipate future demands, assess trade-offs, and guide investment decisions.

One factor that remains insufficiently reflected in planning and budgeting processes is care. Unpaid care influences labor supply, productivity, human capital development, household welfare, demand for services, and long-term development outcomes. It also shapes how demographic changes—including fertility decline, population aging, and changing dependency patterns—affect households, communities, and public institutions. Yet these relationships are not always visible within conventional planning and budgeting frameworks.

This brief examines how care influences planning and budgeting decisions and how technical ministries can integrate care-related evidence into planning, investment, and cross-sector coordination processes.

Care Is a Planning Variable

Care systems shape the outcomes that technical ministries plan, invest in, and manage.



Why Care Systems Matter

Technical ministries are responsible for many of the systems that shape care needs and care outcomes. Decisions related to infrastructure, transport, water and sanitation, education, health, labor markets, social protection, and public investment all influence how care is provided, who provides it, and the time and resources required to meet care needs. In turn, care affects many of the outcomes that ministries seek to improve, including labor force participation, productivity, human capital development, service utilization, and economic growth.

Care should therefore be understood as an important planning variable, not as a separate social issue. When care is not adequately considered, planning assumptions may fail to reflect the realities faced by house-

holds and communities. Investments in education, health, employment, and other sectors may achieve weaker results if caregiving responsibilities limit people's ability to access services, participate in training, or engage in paid work. Demographic changes such as population aging can also increase future demand for care-related services and place additional pressure on public resources if these trends are not anticipated in planning processes.

Because care intersects with multiple sectors, no single ministry is responsible for care. Yet decisions across health, education, labor, social protection, infrastructure, and finance collectively shape care outcomes – making cross-ministerial coordination essential.

Key Evidence Relevant to Technical Ministries

Technical ministries routinely make decisions about investments in infrastructure, education, health, labor markets, and social protection. Different forms of evidence can help make often-overlooked dimensions of demographic change and care more visible, supporting better anticipation of future service demand, more realistic assumptions about labor force participation, and more effective investment targeting.

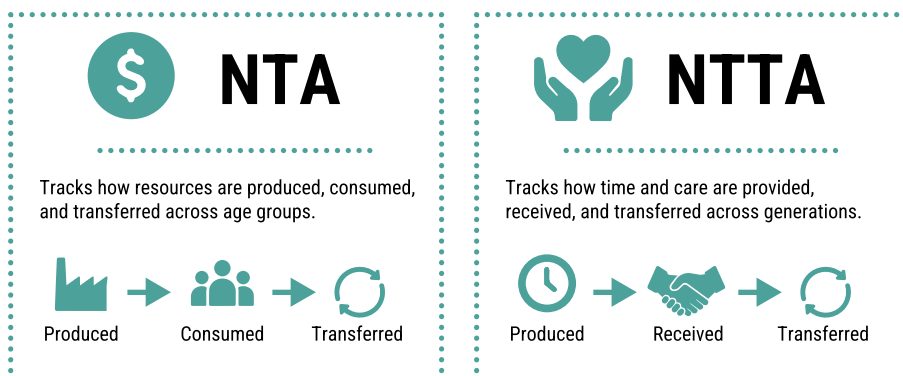
Time-use surveys reveal how individuals allocate their time, making visible the unpaid care work that remains outside conventional statistics¹.

Unpaid Care Work is a Major Source of Labor

Time-use surveys reveal the scale of unpaid care work and its implications for labor supply, productivity, and human capital development.



Understanding Transfers Across Generations



By quantifying this labor, time-use data help ministries better understand constraints on labor supply, employment, and human capital development.

Demographic and intergenerational analysis provides additional insights. National Transfer Account (NTA) and National Time Transfer Account (NTTA) analyses reveal how demographic transitions are reshaping dependency patterns and care responsibilities across generations².

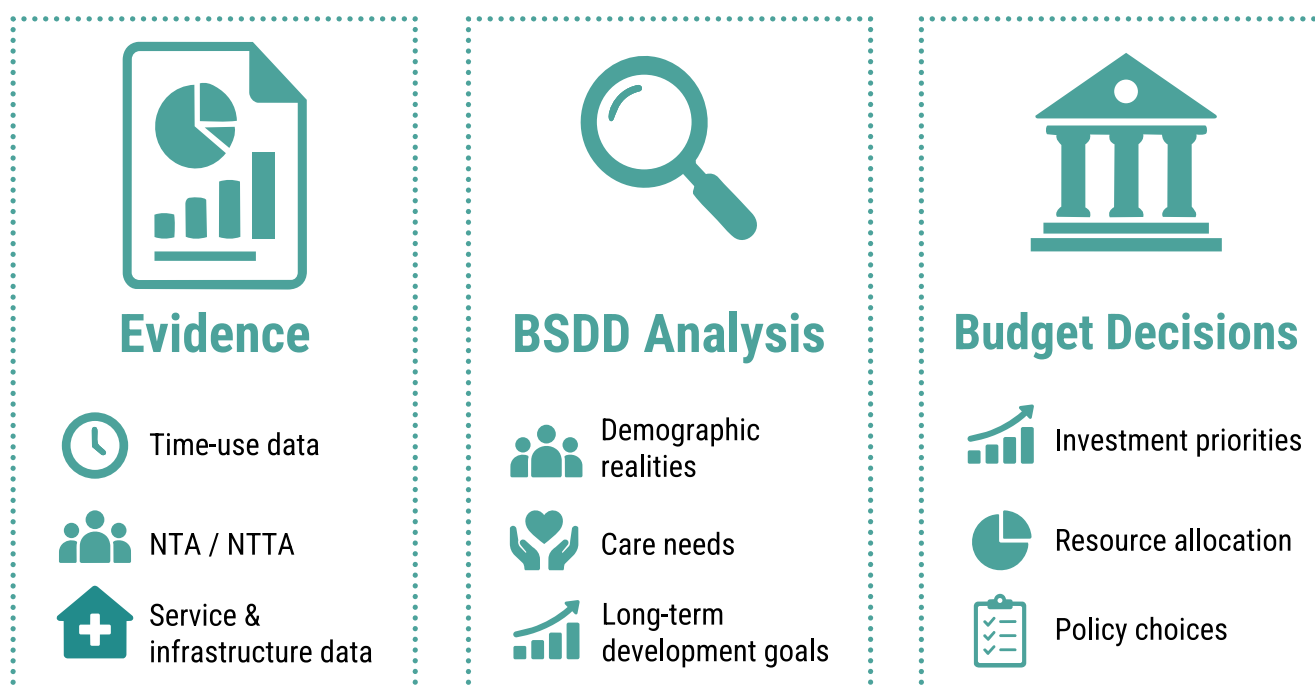
Together, they show how demographic change affects labor supply, dependency, care needs, and public spending.

Together, these tools help ministries anticipate how demographic change will affect labor supply, service demand, public spending, and long-term development planning.

Evidence from administrative records, population and housing censuses, household surveys, service delivery assessments, and sector management information systems can help ministries assess access to water, energy, childcare, healthcare, transport, and disability support. These data identify where gaps in infrastructure and services increase unpaid care burdens and constrain economic participation, providing an evidence basis for investment planning and resource allocation.

Budgeting Sensitive to the Demographic Dividend (BSDD) serves a different purpose from the tools above: rather than measuring care, it helps translate evidence on care and demographic change into planning and budgeting decisions.³

BSDD Translates Evidence into Planning and Budgeting Decisions



What This Means for Technical Ministries

The key challenge for technical ministries is not only to understand what evidence reveals, but to anticipate how demographic and economic trends will shape future demand for services, infrastructure, and public spending. Care is central to this planning agenda because it influences labor supply, productivity, human capital development, and the utilization of public services and infrastructure.

When care remains invisible in planning and budgeting processes, important economic contributions, constraints, and future costs can be overlooked – leading to incomplete assessments of demand, inefficient resource allocation, and investments that fail to address the factors shaping development outcomes. Because care is influenced by decisions across multiple sectors – including health, education, transport, water,

energy, and social protection – responding effectively also requires stronger coordination across ministries and agencies. Demographic change reinforces this need, as population aging, shifting dependency patterns, and evolving care needs will reshape labor availability, service demand, and long-term fiscal sustainability.

Analytical tools such as National Time Transfer Accounts (NTTA), the Demographic Dividend Monitoring Index (DDMI), and Budgeting Sensitive to the Demographic Dividend (BSDD) provide practical approaches for incorporating care-related evidence into policy analysis, resource allocation, and investment planning. These tools help technical ministries strengthen coordination, and improve the effectiveness of public investments.

Priority Actions

Planners in technical ministries translate evidence into policies, budgets, and investment decisions. The following actions can help integrate care-related evidence into effective planning, budgeting, and policy decisions:

- 1 Strengthen time-use data systems and integrate care indicators** into national planning processes to improve understanding of how care responsibilities affect labor supply, productivity, service utilization, and economic participation.
- 2 Integrate care into planning, budgeting, and public investment frameworks** by incorporating care-related evidence into development plans, sector strategies, and budget preparation processes — using BSDD to translate evidence into investment priorities and policy decisions.
- 3 Use demographic and care-related analysis** to anticipate future demand for services, infrastructure, and public spending — applying NTA to assess how population aging, shifting dependency patterns, and evolving care needs affect labor availability and fiscal sustainability, and DDMI to monitor progress over time.
- 4 Strengthen inter-ministerial coordination** through joint planning mechanisms across ministries responsible for health, education, labor, social protection, transport, water, energy, finance, and planning to improve policy coherence and investment efficiency.
- 5 Prioritize investments** that reduce care constraints and support economic participation, including childcare, healthcare, eldercare, disability services, water, energy, and transport infrastructure, to strengthen labor force participation, human capital outcomes, and the effectiveness of public spending.
- 6 Institutionalize care-sensitive planning and budgeting** by embedding care considerations into national and sub-national development plans, planning guidelines, and budget frameworks, ensuring that care-related evidence routinely informs government decision-making.

Why This Matters Now

Technical ministries are already responsible for delivering on national and regional commitments related to the demographic dividend, human capital development, gender equality, and sustainable growth. The challenge is no longer whether these priorities matter, but whether planning and budgeting systems are equipped to translate them into effective investments, services, and implementation strategies.

Demographic and fiscal pressures make this responsibility more urgent. Population aging, urbanization, changing dependency patterns, and

growing care needs are increasing demand for services, infrastructure, employment opportunities, and public spending. Decisions made today will shape future labor supply, productivity, fiscal sustainability, and development outcomes. Technical ministries must therefore anticipate these pressures rather than respond only after they emerge.

Many of the foundations for action already exist. The priority now is to integrate care-related evidence more systematically into planning, budgeting, expenditure reviews, sector strategies, and investment decisions.

Learn More

Explore the full reference report, companion policy briefs developed for different audiences, and additional materials.



[Elevating Unpaid Care Work as a Policy Priority in Francophone West and Central Africa.](#) [More information about PRB's work on care](#)



(in English)



(en Français)

Explore Data and Analytical Tools



[National Transfer Accounts \(NTA\)-Country Briefs.](#)

Tracks economic production, consumption, and transfers across age groups.



[National Time Transfer Accounts \(NTTA\)](#)

Measures unpaid care and household work across generations.



[Budgeting Sensitive to Demographic Dividend](#)

Assesses whether budgets support demographic dividend priorities.



[Demographic Dividend Monitoring Index](#)

Tracks a country's readiness to achieve a demographic dividend.



[ILO-Measuring Unpaid Domestic and Care Work.](#)

Measures unpaid care and domestic work.

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¹ International Labour Office. 2018. Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work. Geneva: International Labour Organization. https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40dgreports/%40dcomm/%40publ/documents/publication/wcms_633135.pdf.
² National Transfer Accounts Project. n.d. NTA Countries. Accessed May 29, 2026. <https://ntaaccounts.org/web/nta/showNTA%20countries>.
³ Sahel Women's Empowerment and Demographic Dividend Project (SWEDD). Experience in Applying Budgeting Sensitive to the Demographic Dividend (BSDD). Best Practice Guide No. 13. Ouagadougou: SWEDD, 2024. Accessed June 22, 2026. https://sweddfrancia.org/sites/default/files/2024-02/BreF62013_Exp%C3%A9riences%20pour%20la%20prise%20en%20compte%20de%20la%20budg%C3%A9tisation%20sensible%20au%20dividende%20d%C3%A9mographique%20des%20Bsd4%29_EN.PDF.