



International
Labour
Organization

Mainstreaming Care Work to Combat the Effects of Climate Change



**Green Jobs, an Opportunity
for Women in Latin America**

Climate Change, Gender and Just Transition

▶ **Mainstreaming Care Work to Combat the Effects of Climate Change¹**

**Chapter VI.2 of the Report:
"Green Jobs, an Opportunity for Women
in Latin America. Climate Change, Gender
and Just Transition"**

¹ Chapter 6.VI2 (pages 66 to 70): International Labour Organization and European Commission, Directorate-General for International Partnerships. Maria Elena, V. Green Jobs, an opportunity for women in Latin America, EUROCLIMA+ Program, Brussels, 2023.

The work involved in caring for the planet and that of caring for people are closely linked. They are fundamental for the sustainability of life and essential for reproduction and social well-being. Care work – both paid and unpaid – is necessary for the physical, psychological and social well-being of children, the elderly and people with disabilities, as well as for allowing adults to achieve peak performance at work (Ilkharacan, 2021).

The ILO considers care work crucial for the future of decent work. The majority of unpaid care work – 76.2% – is carried out by women, especially those belonging to groups at risk of social, economic and environmental vulnerability (ILO, 2018c). On comparing the hours of both paid and unpaid work undertaken by men and women, the latter work longer hours. This work overload results in time poverty and limits women's possibilities of generating their own income, gaining access to quality employment, developing their own businesses and progressing towards financial independence. The unjust social organization of care work contributes to widening gender gaps, the feminization of poverty and inequalities among women (ILO, 2018c; ECLAC, 2022c).

Care work undertaken within the sphere of the labour market – especially work carried out by women – in the fields of health, education and the personal and household services sectors is undervalued and faces greater decent work deficits than in other areas of activity. According to ILO estimates (2019d), there are 381 million jobs in this area, representing 11.5% of global employment. Two thirds of paid care workers are women (ILO, 2022b, WHO and ILO, 2022).

Care work is a key component of the Just Transition agenda and an integral part of the transition to a green economy. Labour market operations, as well as economic growth and the wellbeing of the population are based on the use and transformation of the goods provided by nature and on the work of caring for people. It is therefore necessary to consider not only replacing sources of pollution, but also the provision of physical infrastructure and technologies that save working time and facilitate daily care work².

The global care crisis has been exacerbated by the effects of global warming, intensifying the work of caring for people, animals, plants and urban and rural green spaces. The increased demand on households due to the crises triggered by extreme weather events falls on women, who have to develop strategies to make up for the lack of public services and spend more time on the work of caring for the family.

² The ILO uses the concept of "care-related infrastructure" to refer to the sources of water, sanitation and energy that make it possible to perform domestic and care work without heavy work (ILO, 2018c, 38).



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Mitigation and adaptation strategies often tend to prioritize the biophysical aspects of the environment and technical formulas for achieving their objectives, without taking into account the unpaid care work involved. This can exacerbate women's workloads and deepen pre-existing inequalities. Hence the importance that these interventions incorporate this element and contribute to the transformation of the current distribution of reproductive work between men and women (McGregor et al., 2022).

Climate action must be responsive to care and promote a gender-transformative agenda. The 3R Framework – Recognize, Redistribute and Reduce Care Work – sums up the international commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, as set out in Goal 5 of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda³. The ILO has expanded this framework, incorporating the Reward and Represent components, in order to place it on the decent work agenda. It is the view of the ILO that this framework creates a virtuous circle mitigating inequalities related to care, addressing the barriers that prevent women from gaining access to paid work and improving the conditions of all care workers, which leads to an improvement in the quality of care (ILO, 2018c). The 5 Rs are described as follows:

- **Recognize**, that is, acknowledge the value of unpaid care work and make it visible, as well as taking into account its contributions to the workings of society, the economy and the environment.
- **Redistribute**, which involves allocating care equitably across society (including the state and the market), as well as within households between men and women⁴.
- **Reduce** the time spent on unpaid care work, by providing social infrastructure, and expanding care systems and the coverage of public services.

►► Analysing the 5R Framework from the perspective of Just Transition is a first step towards fairer and more sustainable societies.

³ Target 5.4 of Goal 5 states "Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate."

⁴ This means that all household members who are adults and self-employed, regardless of their sex, gender identity or sexuality, assume equal responsibility and spend the same amount of time caring for the family.

- **Reward**, in order to generate decent working conditions, living wages and safe environments for people working in paid care under conditions of environmental sustainability and access to social protection for those who have devoted their lives to unpaid care work and have been left out of contributory systems.
- **Represent**, that is, ensure the effective participation in social dialogue scenarios and guarantee the freedom of association of paid care workers, as well as ensuring that those who provide unpaid care have a voice and participate in other areas of community and public life.

The links between climate change and unpaid care work are evident, but they have not been sufficiently highlighted and climate interventions have tended to ignore that care supports people's work. The Just Transition agenda will not be possible if the importance of care work is not recognized, and unless initiatives are developed for it to be distributed fairly and channels for participation and leadership are opened for caregivers. Analysing the 5R Framework from the perspective of Just Transition is a first step towards fairer and more sustainable societies.



► **Table N°1.** The 5R Framework for Decent Care Work and a Just Transition⁵

Approach	Climate Aspect	Actions
Recognize	<p>Recognize:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unpaid care work is a key component for the Just Transition. - The role of caregiving is essential for moving towards resilience and decarbonisation. - The periods and intensity of care work increase due to the effects of climate change (increase in care needs in the event of a deterioration in the health of family members, greater difficulties for ensuring the wellbeing of the family in the event of environmental disasters, heat waves, water shortages, the deterioration of public infrastructure and services and access to them.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Generate information (quantitative and qualitative) on the effects of climate change on paid and unpaid care work and measure their impact on the main socio-economic and welfare indicators. - Identify and highlight the adaptation and mitigation strategies that people develop in unpaid care work. - Identify how macro, meso and micro adaptation and mitigation actions impact the time people spend on care work. - Incorporate the voices of women and other caregivers in the design of micro, meso and macro climate actions, including in the world of work.
Reduce	<p>Reduce:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The time spent on unpaid care work, the intensity of this care work and time poverty. - Take into account that the incidence of time poverty is higher among people who experience multiple forms of exclusion, especially if there are household members who are dependents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Incorporate into mitigation and adaptation actions the aim of reducing the time spent by women on care work. Include this approach (and measuring the care work involved in the proposed action) when preparing any intervention project. - Identify the effects of the lack of drinking water, sanitation, electricity, heating, transport and 'green' housing on the time spent by women on care work, in order to include these criteria in infrastructure policies. - Expand the provision of green and low-emission infrastructure that plays a key role for care (water, sanitation, energy sources, transport and housing) in order to reduce domestic work (food preparation, transportation and others) and reduce the use of sources of pollution in these tasks. - Develop appropriate technologies (within the framework of mitigation strategies) that are non-polluting, time-saving and require less effort for the work involved in processing and conserving foods and goods for household consumption (for example, efficient kitchen appliances that use renewable energy). - Build appropriate infrastructure and make improvements to housing in order to better protect the health of the family and enhance its resilience to disasters. - Ensure the provision of green transport and roads in rural areas and that urban policies and mobility policies respond to gender criteria, reduce travel times for women and provide safe spaces. - Expand the provision of care services (children, the elderly, people with disabilities) with quality jobs and green and low-pollution infrastructure. - Introduce technology and equipment into non-mechanized agricultural areas, especially in support of women's work in family orchards for household consumption in order to improve their productivity. - Increase women's access to devices, training and the use of digital technology, in particular for those facing multiple forms of exclusion, in order that they may gain greater access to support networks, public services and meteorological information to better prepare for natural disasters.

⁵ The majority of care work is carried out by women, but the conditions in which this work is carried out are not comparable. Persons facing multiple forms of exclusion, marginalisation and discrimination - due to poverty, ethnic or racial origin, advanced age, etc.- also endure worse conditions and have fewer resources for care. This should be taken into account in policy making and budget allocations.

Approach	Climate Aspect	Actions
Redistribute	<p>Redistribute:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The unjust distribution of unpaid care work overburdens women and limits their opportunities for employment, financial independence and empowerment. - Climate change has increased and intensified the time spent on unpaid care work. Redistribute this work among adult household members, the state, the market, and communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop indicators and measure the effects of climate change on the care workload, identifying who undertakes it. - Measure the care workload that adaptation and mitigation actions generate in men and women, with the aim of alleviating women's workloads. - Incorporate into adaptation and mitigation plans actions that aim to promote the redistribution of care work between men and women. - Review, in light of the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No.156), the regulations and institutional culture of companies, with a view to promoting shared responsibility and ensuring non-discrimination in the workplace for reasons associated with family care responsibilities. - Incorporate care as one of the pillars of social protection. - Expand access to social protection by addressing the effects of climate change on health, including reproductive and maternal health. - Develop environmental education campaigns (aimed at all the members of the household and not targeting women) that promote sustainable behaviours and question gender prejudices.
Reward	<p>Reward:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Paid care work and care jobs are fundamental to society, the economy and the environment, and must thus be valued, paid fairly and developed under conditions of decent work and environmental sustainability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review the income structure of men and women in green jobs and make corrections in accordance with the Equal Remuneration for Work of Equal Value Convention, 1951 (No. 100), if required. - Develop policies that lead to the protection of labour rights, formalization, access to social security and closing gender gaps (including the pay gap) in care jobs. - Develop income transfer schemes for people who have devoted themselves to unpaid family care (mostly women) and have been left out of contributory systems (and live in poverty). - Develop training and employability programmes, with access to care services, in order to allow people who have devoted themselves to unpaid family care (mostly women) and want to be employed to re-enter the workforce. - Promote the reduction of the working day in order to ensure a better balance between the daily hours of work, and personal and community life for women and men. - Create special subsidies that link income transfer programmes for poor households with caring for the environment.
Represent	<p>Represent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women not only suffer the effects of climate change due, in particular, to their care responsibilities, but they also have the right and are in a position to contribute their experiences and knowledge to adaptation and mitigation. Their full participation and leadership development must be ensured. - People working in the care sector face specific risks due to climate change. Opportunities for social dialogue should lead to measures to protect them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Include women - paying particular attention to those who are part of social groups that endure multiple forms of exclusion - and their organizations in the planning activities of climate action projects, promoting the recognition and incorporation of issues related to care (needs, knowledge, experiences and rights of caregivers). - Create opportunities for dialogue and participation related to climate change in order to gather together the needs, opinions and proposals of women and their organizations in local, regional and national spaces. Verify that their responsibilities are not limited to traditional subordinate roles. - Create spaces for social dialogue in order to garner proposals from the business and trade union sectors on climate change in the field of care work. - Promote the organization of care workers and the drafting of trade union agendas that reflect their demands and protection needs in the face of the new risks posed by climate change.

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on ILO (2018c and 2020b) and MacGregor et al., 2022.

European Commission

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