ESCR-Net

Feminist and Human Rights-Based

SOCIAL PACT ON CARE

What kind of world and economy do we need ?

> Countries are never prepared, and once such a crisis happens, like COVID-19, it becomes obvious who is excluded from government help packages and assistance, taking measures for corporations and other privileged sectors while others, such as poor women, are marginalized.
>
> –**Claribed Palacios,** Union of Black Domestic Workers (UTRASD), Colombia.

HOW DO WE DEFINE CARE?

All paid and non-paid activities that make **social reproduction** possible and include both direct (e.g., caring for the sick or feeding a child) and indirect activities (e.g., cooking, cleaning, collecting water and/or firewood), as well as **community work**.

WHY IS CARE WORK A WOMEN'S RIGHTS ISSUE?

Worldwide, women and girls provide 3/4 of all unpaid care work, and 2/3 of paid care workers are women. Care work has historically been associated with women and has been distributed in structural conditions of discrimination and inequality, particularly among women and girls of disadvantaged groups. The **unfair social distribution of care**, the deepening global care crisis, and the devastating impacts for women are rooted in a social pact that women never agreed to. This pact has made social reproduction invisible, naturalized care as women's responsibility, deepened the feminization of poverty, intensified women's exploitation, and nurtured a neoliberal capitalist model that centers economic growth instead of well-being and prioritizes profit over people and the planet. Such a pact is not only unfair but unsustainable, as the current crisis is clearly demonstrating.

A NEW SOCIAL PACT ON CARE TO COMBAT STRUCTURAL INEQUALITIES IS URGENT!

A new pact will center human rights, people and the planet, grounding our social and economic relationships in a primary commitment to care. This new pact will reject economic growth as the dominant and only paradigm of development and understands that limitless economic growth and pursuit of profit are unsustainable for all forms of life. Building a feminist future necessarily entails transforming the world of social reproduction as a key step to dismantling the structural inequalities that prevent women from fully enjoying substantive equality and their wider economic, social and cultural rights.

> Patriarchal stereotypes such as perceived roles of women in society and within households continue to impact how care work is viewed within society, but also by those who develop laws and policies.
>
> – **Charlene May,** Women Legal Center, South Africa

WHAT ARE THE 6Rs OF *THE PACT ON CARE?*

Based on the shared analysis of members from a diversity of countries and backgrounds, we have outlined a series of elements (6Rs) that are necessary – and build a feminist future.



1. RECOGNITION

- Make care visible - all forms of care and all carers, paid and un/der/paid - by accounting for and measuring its value holistically, both the colossal economic contribution and as integral to sustaining life.
- Reveal and dismantle patriarchal norms and gender stereotypes that feminize and undervalue care, informing policies that result in concrete change and securing respect as a universal right

2. REDISTRIBUTION

- Make care a shared responsibility within households, communities. and societies, implementing gender transformative policies such as non-transferable paid parental leaves and boosting the capacity of the State to provide public care infrastructure.
- Create an enabling environment for other social actors such as community-led care cooperatives and networks.
- Ensure that the private sector's policies and practices are aligned with quality, rights-respecting care.

3. REDUCTION

- Establish policies that reduce the burden of un/der/paid care work on women in all their diversity, attuned to communities that are disproportionately impacted.
- Public investment in high quality and accessible services and care infrastructure, including water, education, sanitation, healthcare, as well as care for children, the elderly, and those living with disabilities.

4. RIGHTS

- Secure and implement the human right to receive quality, sufficient, and adequate care; provide and receive care under dignified conditions, whether paid or unpaid; and to exercise self- and collective care to ensure well-being.
- Realize substantive equality, addressing intersecting forms of discrimination.
- Guarantee labor rights, universal and adequate social protection, and access to justice.

5.REPRESENTATION

- Ensure that care workers - paid and un/der/paid - as well as community-based networks are central to the governance of care with leadership roles and decision-making power in shaping care policies, including the allocation of resources.
- Strengthen transparency and accountability in public and private care provision.

6. RE-FRAMING THE ECONOMY

- Transition to regenerative economies centering care for people and the planet, prioritizing substantive equality, human rights, and sustainability.
- Invest in social reproduction, expanding provision of and access to quality public services while countering privatization.
- Confront intersecting debt and climate crises, including through debt cancellation, progressive taxation, and gender-transfomrative climate action and finance to ensure maximum available resources for human rights and public care provision.

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The International Network for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights brings together over 300 social movements, human rights organizations, Indigenous Peoples' groups and advocates across 80 countries. Since 2003, its members have united struggles for systemic change, grounded in intersectional feminism, solidarity and equality, to advance a world where care for people and the planet shapes decisions and structures that guarantee human rights for all.

Scan to learn more about our collective work