

# Towards a feminist and human rights-based SOCIAL PACT ON CARE

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and heightened pre-existing structural injustices and inequalities, including gender inequality, embedded in the intertwined histories of patriarchy, colonialism and neoliberal capitalism. There has never been a better moment to ask: **What kind of world and economy do we want to create?**



“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

## HOW DO WE DEFINE CARE?

All paid and non-paid activities that make **social reproduction** possible and includes 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.

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 - although not exhaustive - to advance a feminist and human-rights based pact of care, advance a feminist just recovery and build a feminist future.



“Countries are never prepared, and once such a crisis happens, it very quickly 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**, President of the Union of Black Domestic Workers (UTRASD), Colombia.

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

### ✓ RECOGNITION

- Measure and make visible the role of women and girls in the provision of unpaid care and its social and economic value.
- Transform normalized stereotypes that feminize and undervalue care.
- Reconceptualize care via a political vision that elevates life-sustaining actions.

### ✓ REDISTRIBUTION

- Boost the capacity of the state to provide care.
- Ensure that the private sector's policies and practices are conducive to quality, rights-respecting care.
- Redistribute care among women and men.
- Enable conditions for care provision from other social actors such as community-led care cooperatives and networks.

### ✓ REDUCTION

- Decrease the drudgery and time burden of unpaid care, especially for women living in poverty.
- Invest in time-saving technologies, care infrastructure and quality public services.

### ✓ RIGHTS

- Recognize, respect, protect and fulfill care as a universal right.
- Realize substantive equality, addressing intersecting forms of discrimination.
- Expand, respect, protect and fulfill the rights of all care workers.
- Strengthen access to justice for paid and unpaid carers.

### ✓ REPRESENTATION

- Ensure meaningful representation of paid and unpaid care workers and community-based care networks in the governance of care.
- Strengthen transparency and accountability in public and private care provision.

### ✓ REFRAMING THE ECONOMY AS A CARING ECONOMY

- Transition to a regenerative economy that ensures care and substantive equality, prioritizing human rights and sustainability.
- Invest in social reproduction, expanding provision of and access to quality public services while countering privatization.

## GET INVOLVED!

- For more information on how to get involved, please contact Valentine Sébile at [vsebile@escr-net.org](mailto:vsebile@escr-net.org)
- Learn more: [ESCR-NET.ORG/WOMEN](https://www.escr-net.org/women)

