

THE CLIMATE-CARE NEXUS

ADDRESSING THE LINKAGES BETWEEN CLIMATE CHANGE AND WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' UNPAID CARE, DOMESTIC AND COMMUNAL WORK

What is care work?

Care work is any labour that involves caring for others, caring for the planet and caring for oneself. Care work is fundamental for well-being and essential for a vibrant, sustainable economy with a productive labour force. As such, care should be acknowledged as a public good and universal right, which is articulated in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.* Yet around the world, women and girls shoulder a disproportionate share of care work that is *unpaid, unrecognized and undervalued*.



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From the 3Rs to the 5Rs of care work

The global discourse on care work has shifted from a 3Rs framework to a 5Rs framework whereby the **recognition, reduction and redistribution** of *unpaid* care work are complemented by **reward and representation** of *paid* care work. The **resilience** of care systems in the face of global crises such as climate change and environmental degradation could also be included in the framework, as well as the **resources** needed to support and finance its implementation.

How do climate change, gender equality and care intersect?

The [global care crisis](#) is being aggravated and intensified by environmental degradation and the global climate emergency. Its impacts are more acute for people with scarce resources and low incomes, especially in rural, remote and conflict areas of developing countries. Globally, women and girls already spend three times as much time on this work on average as do men

and boys, and they inevitably take on the bulk of care work when care demands increase and intensify and public and private systems are inadequate and underfunded.

The transformation of societies and economies towards paradigms centred on interdependence, care and sustainability is urgently needed. This is a key moment for rethinking the dominant development model based on the extraction and exploitation of natural resources, fossil fuels and human lives, and for making caring for people and the planet a central concern.

What are the key considerations?

- Clear evidence and data link climate change and women's and girls' unpaid care, domestic and communal work
- Climate change and environmental degradation increase and intensify women's and girls' unpaid care, domestic and communal work
- National efforts are emerging to address unpaid care and domestic work through multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs)
- Gender-responsive climate action offers opportunities to recognize, reduce, and redistribute unpaid care work and reward and represent paid care workers
- Gender-responsive just transitions policies and initiatives must value and address paid and unpaid care work

* SDG 5.4 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.

Recommendations

Governments, supported by international organizations, UN agencies and civil society, should *recognize, reduce and redistribute* unpaid care, domestic and communal work in the context of climate change and environmental degradation and *reward and represent* paid care work in a gender-responsive just transition with sufficient *resources* to achieve climate *resilience*, with the following actions:

On national frameworks and policies

- Take all appropriate measures to recognize, reduce and redistribute women's and girls' disproportionate share of unpaid care, domestic and communal work when developing, implementing and evaluating climate change and environmental degradation policies and actions.
- Incorporate women's and girls' paid and unpaid care and domestic work as a priority in negotiating country positions and reporting to MEAs, such as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and National Drought Plans (NDPs).
- Develop or strengthen national and local government laws, policies and services that recognize and address women's and girls' disproportionate share of unpaid care, domestic and communal work.
- Ensure that national gender equality policies or plans address women and girls' paid and unpaid care, domestic, and communal work in relation to climate change and environmental degradation.
- Incorporate the issue of women's and girls' paid and unpaid care and domestic work in relation to climate change and environmental degradation in national CEDAW reports.

On women's voice, agency and participation

- Ensure the participation, voice and agency of women and girls to advocate for and monitor the implementation of the 5Rs of care work in negotiations and decision-making related to climate and environmental policies at all levels.

On investments in decent work and social protection

- Invest in universal social protection systems and accessible, affordable and quality care services that are adaptive to a changing climate.
- Provide quality healthcare, including mental healthcare, to women and girls, particularly the poorest and marginalized, in the face of increases in unpaid care and domestic work.

- Invest in quality green jobs, including decent care jobs, for women as well as sustainable care services and infrastructure and adaptive social protection towards a gender-responsive just transition.

On data and accountability

- Invest in the collection, analysis and generation of gender data and statistics on the interlinkages between climate change, gender equality, and paid and unpaid care work.
- Ensure implementation, monitoring and reporting on SDG target 5.4.1.

On financing

- Collaborate with the gender focal points of the financing mechanisms associated with the MEAs (Global Environment Facility, Climate Investment Funds, Green Climate Fund, Adaptation Fund and Global Mechanism) and multilateral development banks to identify ways to incorporate women's and girls' unpaid care, domestic and communal work into project approval, monitoring and performance criteria.
- Address the crippling debt crisis and austerity measures in developing countries by calling for debt cancellation and an overhaul of the global debt architecture, to allow countries to make the investments necessary to achieve climate goals and the 5Rs of care work.

On capacity strengthening

- Develop the capacities of policymakers and practitioners to address the 5Rs of care work in climate and environment investments and initiatives at the global, regional and national level, particularly national gender equality mechanisms and women's civil society organizations and gender advocates.
- Support the incorporation of considerations related to women's and girls' paid and unpaid care, domestic and communal work in MEA processes and improve the capacity of gender negotiators under the MEAs, with special attention to the UNFCCC.



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