



## DRAFT CONCEPT NOTE FOR SIDE EVENT

### Debate

## The Impact of Care Systems and Social Protection Models on Women's Rights and Autonomy: Reflections from the South

**DATE:** March 13

**TIME:** 8:15 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.

**CONFERENCE ROOM:** 11 UN

**Length:** 1 hour and 15 minutes

#### Background:

Care economy is increasingly acquiring importance and has been historically analyzed and promoted by women's and feminist movements. In some countries, this issue has slowly permeated public policy agendas.

There is strong evidence across the world regarding the importance of the social organization of care to account for the possibilities and obstacles that women face in their search of autonomy.

In those places where traditional gender stereotypes are deeply entrenched, where public care services are neither enough nor adequate and access to paid care services is difficult and costly, the social organization of care depends almost exclusively on women's unpaid care work. This constrains women's economic, political and labor participation, the generation of their own income, the possibility of becoming independent and autonomous, and the opportunity to continue education or participate in social and political life. An increased burden of care responsibility and limited resources to face it, make these constraints even worse and they exacerbate when austerity measures on public budgets cut spending on basic social services.

Deep economic, cultural and demographic changes with an impact on society, together with the unfair social organization of care, lead to the unsustainability of traditional care

arrangements, producing a persistent trend, in general, of reproduction of inequality and, in particular, of gender inequality.

In this context of care crisis, there is an urgent need of policies and measures but, at the same time, they must be sustainable and able to meet current and future needs, based on a new model of social organization of care. The paradigm of social co-responsibility has been coming up in the debates as the framework that would allow a more equal distribution of responsibility not only between men and women but also between households, the State, markets and communities.

Progress along this line is possible as long as unpaid care work is acknowledged as a fundamental economic contribution and care is considered as a basic universal right. This has been reinforced in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, through Target 5.4 whereby Member States commit to acknowledge and value unpaid care and domestic work through public services, infrastructure and social protection policies, and the promotion of shared responsibility within families and households, as the case may be in each country.

Along this line, the report called “Progress of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean 2017. Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights” is a regional example that can shed light on other experiences. This report identifies the recognition, reduction and redistribution of unpaid care and domestic work as one of the six key strategies to promote women’s economic empowerment, and to achieve an adequate level of social well-being. Records show specific regional actions and initiatives that many countries — many times with UN support— have engaged in to recognize, redistribute and reduce women’s care work and other forms of unpaid work. These actions should focus on the need to coordinate care policies as the starting point of a roadmap where governments make solid institutional commitments.

Care public policies are unswervingly connected to social protection systems. National care systems —which, in some national cases, are in the process of debate, formulation and construction— draw on social protection systems, completing them and challenging them.

Additionally, at present, social protection systems face challenging and threatening conditions. On one hand, transformations in terms of the organization of production and paid work, pushed by technological progress and processes of globalization of production. On the other hand, the growing influence of the corporate private sector on public agendas and institutions, and its trend to commodify and privatize basic social infrastructure and the provision of social services. This poses increasing challenges for the preservation and promotion of women’s rights, access to social services and stronger autonomy.

Given the relevance of this issue, we must review the experience of the regions where this problem is under debate and where initiatives are being formulated on a political agenda of care. For instance, different governments in Latin America have implemented



strategies and inspiring experiences which can be used as examples and a platform for learning, quality improvement, innovation and scalability of this kind of policies. While in other countries such as Cape Verde, the first steps have been taken for the formulation of a care system or care policies, as it is an increasingly pressing issue for the population.

### **Objectives of the event**

This event will provide the opportunity to discuss the possibilities of transformation of the social organization of care through the promotion of national care systems within the framework of institutions of social protection. Thus, the proposal is to discuss where care is placed within social protection systems, which are the responsibilities of the State and the experiences of care incorporation in countries from the Global South, including the groundbreaking comprehensive national care system in Uruguay, as well as the lessons learnt in other cases and the possibilities of South-South cooperation initiatives in this field.

Another objective of the event will be to make a collective analysis —with other players and through a critical lens— of the challenges posed by trends to privatize public services and the financing for development agenda, and how this threatens the realization of women’s rights and autonomy, and the capacity of the State to assume obligations with scarce resources, restricted scope of action or little room for policies.

### **Participants:**

- Corina Rodríguez Enríquez, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN)
- Julio Bango, National Secretary of Care, Government of Uruguay
- Government of Cuba: delegate to be appointed
- María Noel Vaeza, Director of Programs Division, UN Women
- Crystal Simeoni, African Women’s Development and Communication Network (FEMNET)
- Government of Cape Verde: to be confirmed

**Moderator:** Social Worker Mariella Mazzotti, Director of *Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres* [National Women’s Institute]