



Oral Statement
UN Commission on Social Development
61st Session – 6-15 February 2023
Priority theme: Creating full and productive employment
and decent work for all as a way of overcoming
inequalities to accelerate the recovery from the COVID-
19 pandemic and the full implementation of the 2030
Agenda for Sustainable Development

Make Mothers Matter thanks the UN DESA team for all their work and for giving us the opportunity to raise the voices of mothers.

The Covid-19 pandemic has shed light on the issue of the inequitable distribution of unpaid care work and how it can be a major barrier to accessing decent work for women, especially when they are mothers.

It has also shown how essential and foundational this work is for the wellbeing of all, and for the functioning and future of our society and our economy. When estimating its financial value, unpaid care work represents between 10 and 30% of GDP¹. In some countries, more than half of the total work hours are unpaid².

Realizing Target 5.4 of the development agenda is an essential first step that must be re-prioritized. But this is not enough³.

We at MMM are calling on the Commission to reaffirm the importance of addressing this issue to progress on women's access to and participation in the labour market, and to promote the appropriate measures - using the 3R framework.

1. **Recognize.** Making unpaid care work visible using Time-Use Surveys is a necessary step to which member States have committed with target 5.4. Still as of 2018, only 72 States have conducted such surveys. In addition, unpaid care work must also be recognized as 'work', valuable and skilful work, which sustains our economy. It is an investment in human capital that deserves full support. Disconnecting basic social protection, including healthcare, from formal employment and making it universal is one concrete way to recognize the value of unpaid care work.
2. **Reduce.** Unpaid care work often compensates for the lack of basic public infrastructure, including water and sanitation, electricity, energy, ICT, and transportation, and the lack of essential public services like healthcare and care services. Accessible public infrastructure and services must be a top priority for governments, who must also ensure women's participation in their development,

¹ See the 2013 Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty to the UN GA on *Unpaid care work and women's human rights* - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-poverty/annual-reports-1999-2014>

² For example Switzerland – see <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/fr/home/statistiques/travail-remuneration/activite-professionnelle-temps-travail/conciliation-travail-non-remunere.html>

³ See our 2022 HLPF written statement on prioritizing target 5.4 <https://makemothersmatter.org/prioritising-sdg-5-target-5-4-to-recognize-the-work-of-mothers-and-advance-all-the-sdgs/>

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so that they best serve their needs and reduce unpaid work.

3. **Redistribute.** To close the care gap, unpaid care work must be framed as a collective responsibility, with everybody taking their share, including government and the private sector. This means initiating policies to promote a more equitable sharing between men and women, but also policies from both governments and the private sector to support unpaid caregivers.

The time has come to take a more holistic view of 'decent work', where both paid and unpaid care work are considered and their interrelation and interdependence recognized. The right to work and its relation to Care as a right – right to care, right to be cared for, and right to selfcare – needs to be reassessed and work policies rethought.