



## 64<sup>th</sup> UN Commission on Social Development

Advancing Social Development and Social Justice  
through Coordinated, Equitable, and Inclusive Policies

### Care, the overlooked dimension of social development and justice

Make Mothers Matter would like to highlight a crucial but still largely overlooked dimension of social development and justice: care, not only as a private act, but as a public responsibility and a structural pillar of equitable societies.

Unpaid care work carried out disproportionately by women, particularly mothers, remains essential to sustaining life, families, and economies. Yet it continues to be invisible in policy, undervalued in budgets, and absent from legal frameworks. This invisibility carries real consequences: economic insecurity, time poverty, and intergenerational cycles of inequality, especially for already marginalised women.

Advancing social justice requires transforming how we recognise, organise, and support care. This means moving from fragmented support to coordinated systems, from narrow solutions to intersectional design, and from individual to collective responsibility.

*Examples of good practice exist*

Some models show the way forward:

- In Uruguay, the **National Integrated Care System** establishes care as a legal right and provides coordinated services for children, older adults, persons with disabilities, and their caregivers. It is supported by a national framework that ensures continuity across political cycles and participation by civil society in shaping its priorities.
- In Bogotá, the **District Care System** designed inclusively through dialogue with over 5,500 women, reimagines the urban space by centring care within local planning. Its **Care Blocks** bring services together in one place, and mobile units extend access to underserved areas. Importantly, it invests in cultural transformation, including through initiatives that engage men in caregiving roles.

These systems are not perfect, but they demonstrate what is possible when care is treated as a right, a public good, and a shared societal responsibility.

However, no care system can be inclusive if it does not actively address intersectionality. Single mothers, migrant women, women with disabilities, and caregivers in rural or informal settings face overlapping disadvantages. A one-size-fits-all approach cannot respond to these diverse realities. Policies must be adapted to reach and support those most often excluded.

### *Care Systems, accelerators of the 2030 Development Agenda*

Integrated and intersectional care systems are also powerful accelerators of the Sustainable Development Goals:

- They advance **gender equality** (SDG 5) by recognising, reducing, and redistributing unpaid care work.
- They improve **health and well-being** (SDG 3) by reducing stress and time poverty among caregivers.
- They enable access to **education and lifelong learning** (SDG 4) by freeing up time for mothers and girls.
- They contribute to **economic inclusion and decent work** (SDG 8) by supporting women's employment.
- They help build more **equitable cities and communities** (SDGs 10 and 11) by embedding care into local development strategies.

Despite these connections, care remains underrepresented in national SDG strategies. This is a missed opportunity.

### *Our call*

To truly advance social justice through inclusive and coordinated policies, Make Mothers Matter calls on Member States and relevant institutions to take the following steps:

- **Recognise care as a right:** Governments should officially recognise the right to give and receive care. This means including care in national laws, development plans, and social protection systems, so that all people, especially women, can count on public support for caregiving throughout their lives.
- **Create and fund public care services:** States should invest in a range of high-quality care services, like childcare centers, elder care, support for people with disabilities, respite care, parental leave, and training for caregivers. These services should be free or affordable, widely available, and adapted to people's specific needs.
- **Make care systems inclusive for all:** Care policies should be designed with attention to those most at risk of exclusion, such as low-income women, migrants, people with disabilities, and those living in rural or informal areas. Services must be easy to access, culturally appropriate, and responsive to different realities.
- **Include caregivers and communities in decision-making:** People who give and receive care, especially women and those from marginalised groups, must be part of shaping care policies. Governments should create formal spaces where their voices are heard and their knowledge helps guide decisions.
- **Promote shared responsibility for care:** Care should not fall only on women. States should fund campaigns, education, and programs that encourage men and boys to take on care

responsibilities, shift harmful gender norms, and promote equality within families and communities.

- **Integrate care into the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):** Care must be included in countries' SDG strategies. This means setting measurable goals related to care, allocating specific funding to care services, and ensuring that government ministries work together to implement care-related policies.

#### *In Conclusion*

There is a growing consensus that care work is not peripheral. It is central to inclusive economies and resilient societies. It enables all other forms of work, yet receives none of the recognition or investment it deserves.

A more just future depends on transforming how we value and support care. By building integrated and inclusive care systems, we do not simply shift responsibilities from individual women; we reshape social contracts around shared responsibility, dignity, and equity.

This is what countries of the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean call a 'care society' in the Buenos Aires Commitment they adopted in 2022—a vision that we at Make Mothers Matter fully support. And it is the foundation for the kind of social development this Commission envisions.