

# Concept Note: Transforming Care in East and Southern Africa

<b>Project Title:</b>	Knowledge Sharefair on the Care Agenda
<b>Executing Agencies:</b>	UN Women
<b>Geographical coverage:</b>	Eastern and Southern Africa Region
<b>Dates and Location:</b>	November 1 <sup>st</sup> – November 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 2022, Nairobi, Kenya

## Background

Care work is a crucial element for human wellbeing as well as an essential component for a vibrant sustainable economy with a productive labour force. Care work ensures the sustaining of the complex and life-sustaining web on which our very existence depends on. Women and girls shoulder a disproportionate share of unpaid care work around the world, and gender imbalances in the distribution of care work constitute a root cause of women’s economic and social disempowerment. Care work and care responsibilities affect women and men in different ways depending on their circumstances, including gender roles, race, class, age, sexual orientation and gender identity, disability, marital status and migration status. Changing social and economic structures and practices is critical to recognizing the value of care, reducing the disproportionate share of unpaid care work carried out by women and girls, and redistributing care responsibilities equitably between women and men, in households, communities, the world of work and the state. Care must be recognized as a universal right as well as an essential building block for economic and social wellbeing and sustainable development. Furthermore, care work should be recognized as work, as skilled, and as a public (opposed to private) issue.

In Africa, women spend around 3.5 times more on unpaid care work than their male counterparts, resulting to women having less time available than men to dedicate to activities which provide financial returns, leadership positions or personal development. The most common profile of unpaid carers in Africa are women between the ages of 15 and 54 with limited financial resources, have several children, low level of education, with health problems or disabilities, who simultaneously works for pay or profit mainly in the informal sector and receives minimal or no formal care support.



## Rationale

There are three main problems with care (1) the lack of co-responsibility, (2) care is considered a women's issue and (3) care is linked to inequality. The unequal gender distribution and low status is a key barrier to women's social, political and economic empowerment. Although care is a co-responsibility, households carry the main care obligation. Care work should be distributed between the households, state, private sector, and civil society. There is a systemic nexus between care, inequality and poverty. This means that care is fundamentally linked to inequality and poverty. In unjust care systems, care is unequally distributed, and a vicious cycle is created between care and exclusion, vulnerability and poverty. Some social groups access decent care while others suffer from precarious care.

The Sustainable Development Goals, target 5.4 through the '3R Strategy' recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work calls for actions to go beyond increasing the visibility of unpaid care work as a policy issue to also include policies to alleviate the care work and divide it between women and men and families and public/market services in a more balanced and equitable manner, providing better and more visible employment to care workers, such as decent work.

Care policies, macroeconomic, social protection, labour and migration policies work cohesively to provide a conducive policy environment to advance decent care work, enabling the **recognition**<sup>1</sup>, **redistribution**<sup>2</sup> and, where necessary, the **reduction**<sup>3</sup> of unpaid care work, as well as promoting the **representation**<sup>4</sup> of, and decent work for, care workers including **rewarding**<sup>5</sup> systems. As the African continent continually faces cascading global crises in the forms of conflicts, climate change, environmental degradation and in recent years the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, it is vital to consider resilience in the 5R framework. By promoting the resilience of care systems in the face of these crises and spiralling care needs and demands on women and girls, and addressing their compounding impacts, such as food and energy shortages and forced migration.

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), under its Global Strategic Plan (2022-25) has identified women's unpaid care and domestic work as a key issue for women's empowerment after extensive consultations with member states, stakeholders and partners. Within this context, with the support of the Global Affairs Canada (GAC) and in partnership with the African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), the UN Women East and Southern Africa Regional Office (ESARO) is hosting a regional convening to discuss, elaborate, and define the parameters of this agenda for the East and Southern Africa Region (ESAR) in the form of a Knowledge ShareFair.

The Sharefair intends to develop an East and South Africa Region (ESAR) definition on the care agenda as well as strengthen the capacity and knowledge on unpaid care and domestic work in the region. The

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<sup>1</sup> Improving data and statistics on care is crucial in recognizing women's work and care responsibilities

<sup>2</sup> Investing in quality, affordable and accessible care services; ensuring care-friendly and gender-responsible social protection systems; implementing gender-responsive maternity, paternity and parental leave policies; implementing family-friendly workplace policies and arrangements; shifting social norms on care; engaging men and fathers in care; developing care-relevant training and advocacy tools

<sup>3</sup> Increasing access to care-relevant infrastructure and time- and labour-saving technologies

<sup>4</sup> Formalizing care and domestic work; promoting freedom of association, social dialogue and collective bargaining for care workers; ensuring equal opportunity and treatment for migrant care workers

<sup>5</sup> Ensuring decent work for all care workers, including in the informal economy; extending social protection to informal workers

Sharefair will identify and discuss innovative models of care service provision, initiate the discussion to reform discriminatory laws and policies, and identify priority areas for investment to reduce the time burden in the care sector. Moreover, the aim is to advocate for the right to care, raise awareness on the value of unpaid care and domestic work and promote positive social norms. The combined knowledge, expertise and skills will be utilized to diagnose the care economy's dire needs, and upscale suitable innovative technologies and policies in the region.

## Objectives

Against the above background UN Women, with the support GAC and in partnership with FEMNET, will host a three-day **Regional Knowledge Sharefair** on the care agenda. The three-day capacity development, sharing and learning event will provide opportunity to further explore the role of women and girls in building and strengthening resilience and promote dialogue on the care agenda. The outcomes of the event will be 1) establishing a common vision and understanding of the unpaid care and domestic work issues in ESAR; 2) increasing the capacity of stakeholders and partners on unpaid care and domestic work in ESAR; 3) the creation of a strong regional network on the care agenda and amplify solutions beyond the Knowledge Sharefair. In addition to strengthening the capacity and understanding of the SDGs and the 5R strategy, from an ESAR perspective. The event will also facilitate a long-term collaboration amongst regional stakeholders with the aim of identifying problems, using data and predictive methods. The main expected outcome will be increasing the capacity of unpaid care and domestic work in ESAR, including the creation of a strong regional network to amplify resilience solutions beyond the Knowledge Sharefair, sustaining change in policy and practice within relevant macro-economic frameworks. Eliminating discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes, encouraging positive masculinities, and enacting care-friendly employment policies to balance work and family commitments, facilitated by culturally relevant education curricula and media and advocacy campaigns are one of the key means in addressing the inequalities in the care economy.

### *ESAR Care Agenda*

The care agenda is often perceived as a westernized concept, however evidence and data shows that women in ESAR are equally if not more affected by the heavy burden of unpaid care and domestic work. With the aim to increase the knowledge and strengthen the capacity of unpaid care and domestic work in the region and its many implications on the ESAR economy and society, UN Women, with the support of the Government of Canada and in partnership with FEMNET will develop an ESAR care agenda. The ESAR care agenda will be based on research, knowledge and experience of UN, Government, academia and civil society partners. This agenda will include, but not be limited to, the 5Rs and resilience and overall describing the implications of unpaid care and domestic work on women, young women and girls from an ESAR perspective.

### *Capacity development*

The capacity development workshop will be based on the 5Rs, including resilience, and will include the following thematic areas:

- Care policies
- The synergies between the care economy and climate change

- Violence against women and girls and its correlation to care work
- The importance of data
- Girls and young women's unpaid care work and its implication on their NEET rate
- Social norms and gender stereotypes and its implication on care work
- Macro-level investment priorities for reducing women's time and economic poverty.

The three components of the Knowledge Sharefair will be intertwined during the three-days, incorporating learning and experience sharing, from an ESAR perspective. To provide an opportunity for stakeholders to showcase their work on the care agenda in an innovative way, an exhibition will be incorporated in the Knowledge Sharefair.

The Knowledge Sharefair intends to:

- 1) **Expand the evidence base:** develop an ESAR definition on the care agenda to increase the knowledge regarding women and girls' unpaid care and domestic work in all aspects, by Africanizing the 5Rs, from an ESAR perspective.
- 2) **Strengthening multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral dialogue:** provide a platform bringing together governments, development partners, civil society, academic, research institutions and private sector to strengthen the capacity on the care economy and the 5Rs from an ESAR perspective. Including discuss and consult on the key issues, opportunities and barriers in promoting gender equality within the care agenda.
- 3) **Promoting solution oriented south-south collaboration:** showcasing and sharing good practices of policies, interventions and development models that can be adapted and scaled up. Within the international frameworks, explore the local specificity for a more effective national implementation.
- 4) **Uniting women and youth associations in the care economy:** provide and create a durable network/platform linking women's and youth's associations and groups from across the region.