UN Women's strategy to transform care systems in West and Central Africa

2024

WOMEN'S UNPAID CARE WORK IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

In **Sub-Sahara Africa**, women spend **3.1 times more time on unpaid care and domestic work than men** on average (> 2.5 times, the global average).

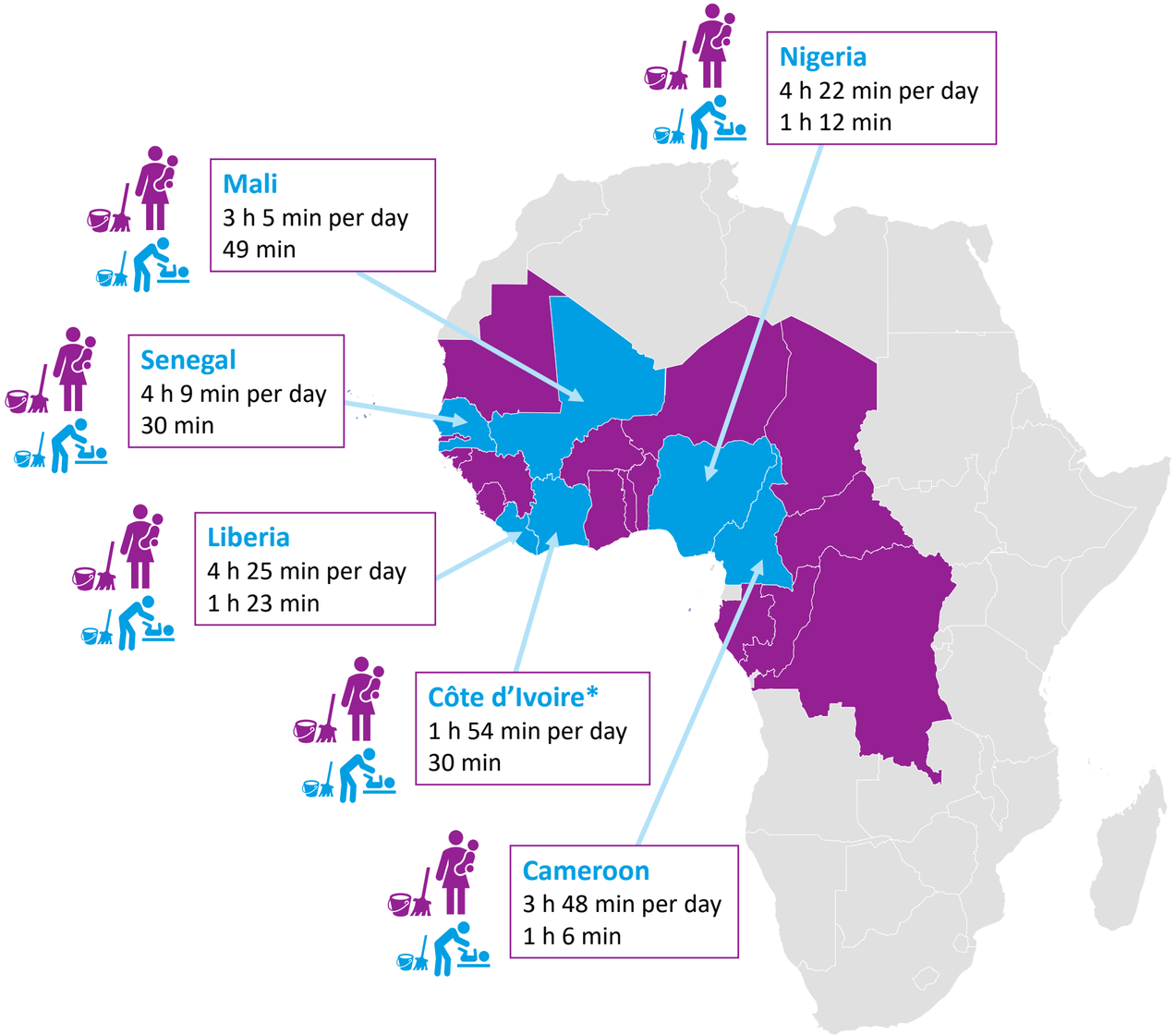
62.7% of women in intra-African cross-border trade and 55% of women business owners in Africa spend between 2 and 5 hours per day on unpaid care and domestic activities.

Rural women in West and Central Africa are the most time-poor: Rural women can spend up to 12 hours daily on unpaid work. Rural women and girls are responsible for collecting water in 6 households out of 10.

Climate change is intensifying rural women's care work increasing time spent collecting wood and water because of deforestation and land degradation, as well as time spent caring for relatives who are sick because of climate induced diseases or natural disasters.

Population dynamics will impact women's unpaid care responsibilities: WCA Countries have a youthful population with 133.4 million children under 4 by 2050. At the same time, the number of older persons is rising with approximately 50 million individuals were aged 65 years and older as by 2050.

Across the region, **unless decisive policy action is taken**, the time women spent on unpaid care responsibilities-expected to increase from 3 hours 39 minutes in 2024 to 4 hours 8 minutes in 2050.



* This data covers housework only

CHALLENGE 1: INEQUALITIES IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF UNPAID CARE WORK

CAUSES

Prevailing Social norms:

- Patriarchy, social expectations, discriminatory social institutions, practices and stereotypes around gender roles make care to be perceived by society as a woman's job, unskilled and undervalued.

Limited access to care/social infrastructure and services especially in rural areas (health centers, childcare centers, energy, water and sanitation, etc.)

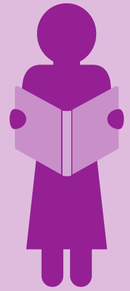
Lack of adequate labour market care-supporting policies (maternal, paternal, and parental leaves; social protection schemes, etc.)

In 2023, in West Africa, 28.24 million women who would like to work are jobless, compared to 18.23 million men mainly due to unpaid care responsibilities.

RESULTING IN

Reduced women's participation in the labour market and increased gender inequality:

- Lower-quality, low-pay, part-time, insecure and informal jobs for women due to time poverty.



Limited choices, time, and opportunities for women in education, public life, and leisure:

- Lack of time to invest in education with implications for intergeneration transmission of poverty
- Underrepresentation in leadership and political spheres
- Intergenerational inequalities from mothers to daughters on care responsibilities
- Physical and mental health impacts on women

Reduced business productivity:

- Unpaid care responsibilities hamper women-led firms' productivity.

CHALLENGE 2: LACK OF ATTENTION AND LIMITED UNDERSTANDING OF THE CARE-DEVELOPMENT LINKAGES FROM POLICYMAKERS

CAUSES

Care Policy deficit

- **Only 1/3 of national social protection strategies** in SSA recognize unpaid care and domestic work and propose specific actions to reduce, redistribute or support it

Fiscal space for care is not seen as a priority

- Care as an economic contribution is not linked to growth in the development narrative and policymakers view care as an expenditure rather than an investment

14 out of 24 countries in West and Central Africa reduce public spending in 2024 disproportionately affecting programmes that primarily benefit women, including healthcare, education, water, and sanitation.

RESULTING IN

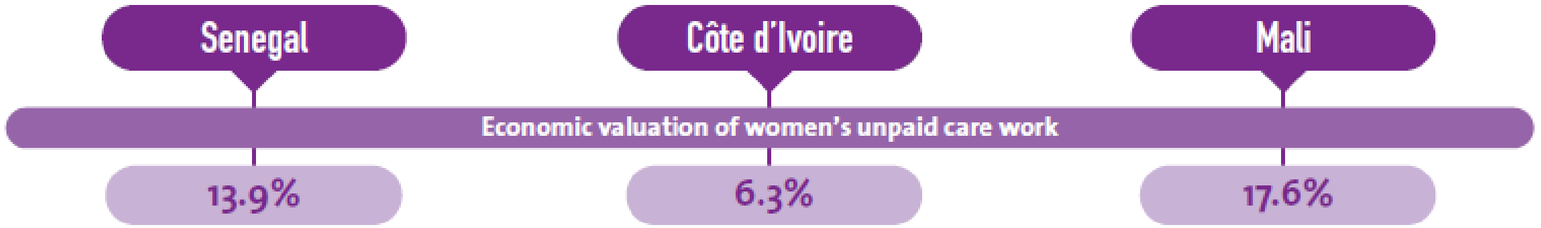
Reduced economic growth for countries

- Multiplier effects in terms of job creation and future fiscal revenue: investing in childcare and long-term care could generate 1 million new formal jobs in Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal and up to 17 million in Nigeria
- If valued, women's unpaid care work would account for **13.9% of GDP in Senegal and 17.6% in Mali**

NOT CARING ABOUT CARE: A MISSED OPPORTUNITY

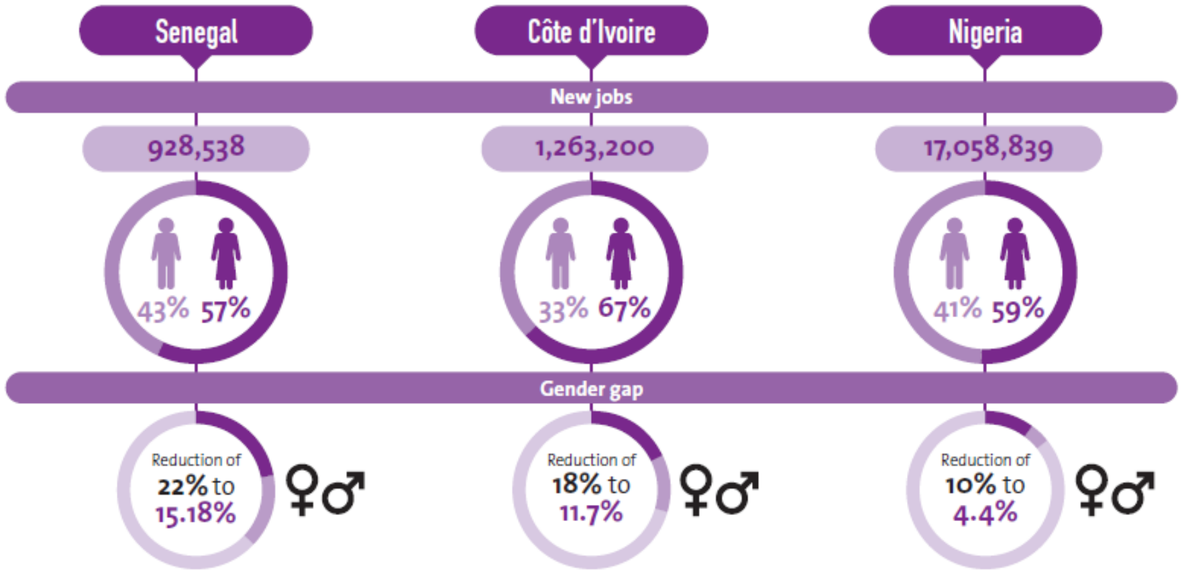
Ignoring women's obstacles to participate in the labour market linked to unpaid care duties **costs** countries in West and Central Africa **between 6-10% of GDP**. In a context of tight fiscal space, capturing this missed opportunity is critical.

GDP increase associated with economic valuation of women's unpaid care work in selected countries[vi]

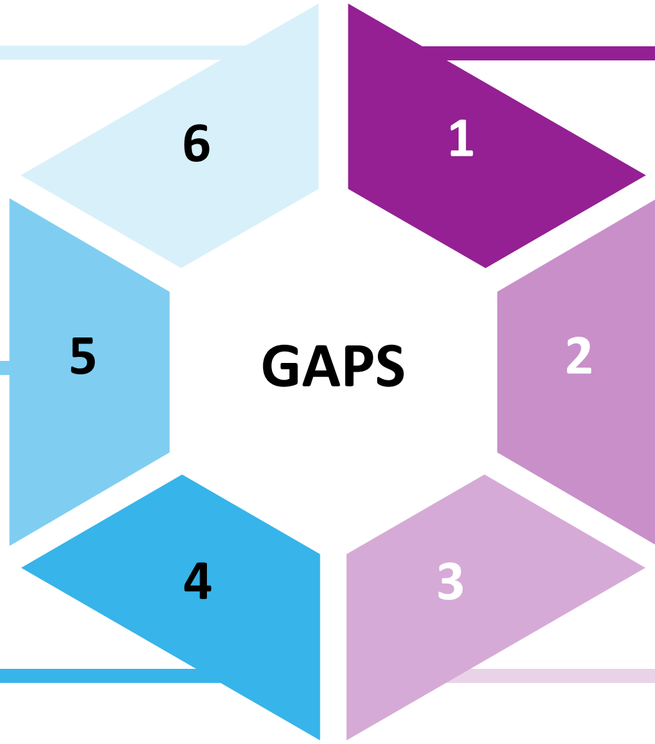


Investing in the care sector can be **a source of low carbon, decent jobs for all**, and for women in particular, thus contributing to sustainable and inclusive growth.

No. of jobs created by investing in universal childcare education[v] :



GAPS ANALYSIS OF THE CARE ECONOMY IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA



DATA

Data on time use and women's unpaid care work is scarce in general and in rural areas in particular

ANALYSIS

Economic and business case for care policies, services and infrastructure is often not adapted to Low-Income Countries' context

REGIONAL FRAMEWORK

Coordination failure: lack of cross-sectoral, and multi-stakeholder approaches to the care economy.
Regional framework or continental approach to care is missing

NARRATIVES

A strong narrative that links the actors, the analysis, the solutions and economic benefits is missing
No vision on investing in care as a public good

SOLUTIONS

- Solutions in terms of care models for women in rural areas and women informal workers in urban settings
- Care strategies adapted to changing contexts in WCA in the context of the polycrises

SPACES

National and regional spaces for learning, and dialogue for reform on care for policy makers and advocates

UN WOMEN'S WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA CARE STRATEGY

By 2030, in the West and Central Africa region

100,000 women and girls with access to care solutions

150,000 low-carbon decent direct, indirect and induced jobs created

10 legal frameworks strengthened through adoption of care normative changes

Increased access to unpaid care solutions for grassroots women and girls in rural and urban-poor areas in Low-Income Countries

Increased women-led care entrepreneurship for the provision of high-quality, accessible, affordable childcare, long-term and domestic care services in Middle-Income Countries

Enablers

Shift in Social Norms

Catalytic Finance for Care

Women-led solutions and innovations

Enabling environment for decent work

Approach

Data, research, and tools to build the economic case of care

Capacity-building of policymakers and advocates on care

Technical support to governments in formulating integrated care policies that make the direct connection between care and socio-economic development and in prioritizing investments in care supporting services and infrastructure (local, national, regional level)

Convening national and regional spaces for advocacy, dialogue and reform

Co-development of locally-adapted care solutions with local partners and the private sector

SUMMARY: UN WOMEN'S WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA CARE FRAMEWORK

Challenges

Inequalities in the distribution of unpaid care work

Lack of attention and limited understanding of the care-development linkages from policymakers

Impact of climate change and crises in the region

Approach

- Data, research, and tools to build the economic case of care
- Convening national and regional spaces for advocacy, dialogue and reform
- Capacity-building of policymakers and advocates on care
- Technical support to governments in formulating care policies and prioritizing care investments (local, national, regional levels)
- Co-development of locally- adapted care solutions with local partners and the private sector

Pathways to action

Increased access to unpaid care solutions for grassroots women and girls in rural and urban-poor areas in Low-Income countries

Increased women-led care entrepreneurship for the provision of high-quality, accessible, affordable childcare, long-term and domestic care services in Middle-Income countries

Enablers

Shift in Social Norms	Women-led solutions and innovations
Catalytic Finance for Care	Enabling environment for decent work

Impact by 2030

100,000 women and girls with access to care solutions

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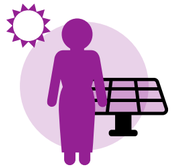
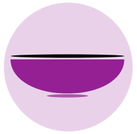
UN WOMEN'S RESULTS ON CARE IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA SINCE 2021



9,772 women farmers access **timesaving climate-smart technologies for productive and domestic use in Senegal**



Unpaid care work reduced for 6,600 families in Mali via access to **improved cookstoves**

6 municipalities in Senegal integrate care provisions and solutions into their Local Development Plans in 2023. **19 municipalities** more being supported in 2024

7,000+ rural women and their household members enrolled for the first time **in the national health insurance scheme, reducing time caring for sick**

Improved capacity of 500+ local, national and regional stakeholders (government, civil society, unions, and research institutes, etc.) on the care-development nexus

3 regional Symposiums on Women's Economic Empowerment and the Care Economy in West Africa in 2022, 2023 and 2024

4 National Care multi-stakeholder policy dialogues in Senegal, Mali, Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire

15 research pieces, knowledge products, tools, produced to develop operational solutions adapted to the reality of the region and to build economic case for care reform in West and Central Africa

Annex 1: UN WOMEN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA CARE ECONOMY STRATEGY: THE METHODOLOGY

Our Care strategy is shaped by three years of internal and external consultations with policymakers, women organizations, advocates, and stakeholders at the local, national, and regional levels, as well as a decade of UN Women's work on the care agenda globally.

- **National multi-stakeholder Care policy dialogues** in Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, and Senegal in partnership with the Ministry of Women's Affairs, Ministry of Population, and Ministry of Labour and Social Protection respectively
- **Focus groups with grassroots women** and municipal-level stakeholders dialogues on women's unpaid care in 13 municipalities in Northern Senegal
- **Symposium on Women's Economic Empowerment and the Care Economy** in West Africa 2022, 2023 and 2024 jointly organized by UN Women and IDRC with 250+ stakeholders from government, civil society, unions, and academia
- **Bilateral meetings with regional and international institutions** working on the care economy in Sub-Saharan Africa
- **Internal consultations with UN Women care experts and women economic empowerment specialists** at headquarters and across our 10 country offices as part of the development of the 'Transformative Approaches to Recognize, Reduce and Redistribute Work unpaid care work in women's economic empowerment' program and during the regional Women's Economic Empowerment Learning Week 2022 and 2023

Alignment with the **UN System Policy Paper 'Transforming Care Systems', UN Women Strategic Plan 2022–2025:** Outcome 1 (norms), and 4 (access to goods, services, and resources), its **Gender Equality Accelerator on Transforming Care Systems, the Sustainable Development Goals 1.3; 5.4; 8.3** and the **Economic Justice and Rights Action Coalition** Pillar 1 on "Increasing women's economic empowerment by transforming the care economy"

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scan me to know more about UN Women's work on transforming care systems

Thank you

UN WOMEN
RECONNAÎTRE RÉDUIRE REDISTRIBUER
LE TRAVAIL DE SOINS NON RÉMUNÉRÉ

ONU FEMMES
CÔTE D'IVOIRE
REDISTRIBUER LE
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PROFITE À TOUTE LA
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LE TEMPS DES FEMMES C'EST DE L'ARGENT
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