

ADVOCATING FOR UNPAID CARE REFORM IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

5 TIPS FOR UN WOMEN COUNTRY OFFICES



Prepared by UN Women Regional Office of WCA

This advocacy brief accompanies country notes presenting the results of studies conducted by UN Women on the fiscal and employment benefits of investing in universal free childcare in Nigeria, Senegal, and Cote D'Ivoire. This brief is meant to provide UN Women country offices with ideas of how to leverage the country notes for policy dialogue and reform at the country level.

Why UN Women advocates for unpaid care reform in West and Central Africa. The COVID19 pandemic has shown the urgency of addressing the unequal distribution of unpaid care that affects societies around the world. While the world is talking about a 'global care crisis' as a result of the pandemic, there is very little discussion of unpaid care reform in West and Central Africa. According to the COVID19 policy tracker, Africa is the region of the world where fewer policy actions to redress the unequal impact of unpaid care have been undertaken during the COVID19 response. The unequal redistribution of unpaid care is a critical obstacle to women's participation in the labour market and to their economic empowerment. Addressing the unequal redistribution of unpaid care is essential to achieve gender equality and as such an important component of SDG5. It is a major priority of the UN Women's Strategic Plan at the normative, coordination, and operational levels. In West and Central Africa, inequalities in the distribution of unpaid care are stark. For example, in Senegal, women spend 37 hours per week doing unpaid care work compared to less than 5 hours for men¹. In Nigeria, women spend on average 2h15 minutes daily on childcare alone compared to 1h35 minutes for men².

The notes that accompany this brief are meant to support UN Women's Country Offices in initiating discussions with a range of stakeholders to push for that reform, by providing evidence-based policy analysis to support this discussion.

INVESTING IN UNIVERSAL FREE CHILDCARE: FISCAL AND EMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

- **The provision of universal childcare is critical to achieving the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and to reduce gender inequalities in the labour market.**
- **Investing in free universal childcare education is good for employment.** It can create up to 1 million jobs in Cote d'Ivoire and Senegal and 17 million jobs in Nigeria.
- **Investing in free universal childcare education is good for gender equality.** The majority of new jobs will be women's jobs, with subsequent reduction in the gender employment gap between 31% and 56% depending on the country. There are additional gains associated with women's increased participation in the labour force and children's human capital.
- **Investing in free universal childcare education is costly but doable.** The investment needed to finance free universal childcare education ranges between 8-10% of GDP. The net investment as a result of an increase in tax collection and income will drop to between 5-6% of GDP. While still high, this can be realized in the medium term through a break-even average tax incidence of about 39-45% depending on the country. This can be financed in the medium term through tax increases or by enlarging the tax base as the economy formalizes.

¹ Proposal to the Government of Spain

² ILO. 2018. Care work and care jobs for the future of decent work.

Key advocacy actions to leverage the briefings for evidence-based policy reform

ACTION #1: Distribute the policy brief to strategic partners first

Share the policy brief on “Investing in free universal child-care: the effects on job creation and fiscal revenue” with the Ministry of Gender and the Ministry of Finance using official channels and propose a meeting to discuss the results.

ACTION #2: Disseminate findings with advocacy groups.

Disseminate the brief widely with other stakeholders: women groups and advocacy organizations in civil society, development partners, etc.

ACTION #3: Engage in policy dialogue

Discuss with the Ministry of Gender and the Ministry of Finance ahead of the multi-stakeholder dialogue, the next steps/commitments that will be announced at the multi-stakeholder meeting (policy reform, further policy review/research) ideally led by the government.

RO economists can participate in those discussions and support you technically.

ACTION #4: Build the advocacy capacity of civil society organisations

You can consider having a separate meeting with women networks and women civil society associations in parallel or prior to the meeting with Government and use the brief to highlight the importance of unpaid care reform so that they can emphasize this during the multi-stakeholder dialogue, or any other processes in the future.

ACTION #5: Initiate a multi-stakeholder dialogue

Organise a multi-stakeholder discussion event (meeting, webinar, workshop, etc.), chaired by the Ministry of Gender and Ministry of Finance to present the results of the policy brief, share the recommendations, and advocate for the importance of investing in care facilities. Extend the invitation to all stakeholders.

EXAMPLE OF GLOBAL ADVOCACY MECHANISM FOR CARE: MEXICO-SPONSORED GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR CARE

In the context of the Mexico Gender Equality Forum, in March 2020, the Government of Mexico launched a “Global Alliance for Care” initiative to create a coalition of Governments, the Private Sector, and other actors, interested in taking bold action to address the imbalances in the distribution of unpaid care, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The initiative, launched in partnership with UN Women, aims to mobilize policy and action that invests in the care economy and ensures economic justice and rights for women and girls worldwide. It seeks to reduce inequalities and promote a cultural transformation by guaranteeing the **recognition, reduction, remuneration, and redistribution** of domestic and care work among every co-responsible actor. Examples of commitments to be taken under the initiative, include the following:

- Launch concrete actions by States, families, communities, and the private sector to develop and increase care services.
- Promote public policies to reconcile personal, family, and work-life with flexible hours.
- Promote reforms to recognize the rights of care providers and recipients.
- Promote transformative actions to promote joint responsibility for care, like awareness campaigns.
- Promote investment in social and physical care infrastructures to guarantee that care services meet the various needs under equal conditions.
- Promote the generation of data and tests.
- Identify and disseminate practices in care work through an experience exchange platform.
- Expand the fiscal space for the gradual and progressive financing of a universal and sustainable care system

Governments in West and Central Africa, willing to take the lead in reforming the unpaid care system in their countries, can join the Alliance by committing to different aspects of the reform and using this mechanism as a source of information, good practices, and peer learning.

Sources: Forum Generation Equality, [link](#); UN Women, [link](#)