

CARING CITIES
From the provision of services to the provision of care

LOCAL ACTION



The well-being of individuals and of communities have always depended on care. The right to care, understood as the possibility to receive and to provide care as well as to self-care, has supported societies. However, only in recent years, especially after COVID-19, care work has become visible as well as the disproportioned burden on women, who have mainly assumed this unpaid work. The time has come for States and Cities to make of care an opportunity, creating policies and systems that place care at the center, going beyond the provision of services and aiming to the provision of care.

From UNDP, in the framework of the UN SDG Action Campaign, we are working closely with cities and local governments to showcase how they are actively contributing to implement the 2030 Agenda, accelerating transformative action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals for all, and everywhere. In this line, we are working with local governments to develop “CARING CITIES” that dynamically care about their citizens, their territories and their institutions.

Today, more than 2 billion people are working 8 hours per day on care and domestic activities with no remuneration around the world. Women are the main group assuming these tasks, spending 2 to 10 times more on unpaid care than men (OECD, 2022). ILO estimates that unpaid

care and domestic work by country is valued between 10 to 39% of GDP thus, unpaid care can contribute more to the economy than the manufacturing, commerce or transportation sectors.

The fact that care work is not paid or recognized as part of the formal economy does not mean that it doesn't have an economic impact; it has it and is huge. Because it is not recognized and it is unfairly distributed, it generates poverty cycles, increasing gender gaps, reinforcing the sexual division of work; increasing the risk of gender-based violence; and creating negative impacts on economy. Unpaid care work reinforces poverty and inequality, especially among a large group of women pertaining to vulnerable groups, such as migrants or rural, are the ones who mainly assume the caregiving tasks.

When it is recognized, redistributed and remunerated, unpaid care brings benefits to society: it increases employment; it improves participation of women in the labor market; increases family income; generates returns by expanding the consumption and savings capacity; increases tax collection and improves social security systems. Recognizing the contribution to social welfare of unpaid care work, promotes a more integral view of economy when it is incorporated into public policies, specially at the local level, positive impacts become really clear (ECLAC, 2023).



The “care crisis” has been acknowledged in the 2030 Agenda, aiming at its transformation by including as one specific SDG target (5.4) the need to: *recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.*

Cities and territories play a crucial role in meeting this goal. Local and regional governments are already responsible of over 65% of the SDG targets, most of them linked to basic service provision. From UNDP, we are working in hand with them designing policies that provide public

service solutions that place care at the center, involving society as whole; including infrastructure and innovative models; implementing comprehensive care systems and policies, and rebuilding the concept of social contract from the local level.

Caring Cities help us rethink care and rethink service provision. By incorporating the concept of “Care” to their policies, local governments are transforming, from being service providers into providers of care. They are leading the innovation in basic service provision, increasingly co-creating services with citizens and providing extra-mile inclusive services for those who need it the most. Thus, we seek to move forward to transform and rebalance the current sexual division of work and of care burdens; breaking the vicious circle between care, poverty and inequality, which limit women's autonomy.

We are also working in giving more visibility to the role local and regional governments play in addressing inequalities and improving the lives of people. To that end, we believe that cities have a story to tell, and we are working closer with our partners at UCLG to tell better stories about how cities and local governments “care”.

Creating comprehensive care systems and policies implies ensuring articulation of different stake holders and the existence of serious institutional arrangements. From experience and research, here are **8 key points to consider when planning and implementing Care Policies and Systems:**

1. **Establishment of a legal framework:** at both the national and territorial level, which articulates responsibilities, policies and stakeholders around care. The cooperation between the nation and the territories is fundamental.
2. **Strengthening local capacities:** since it is at the municipal level that care systems can be materialized, it is necessary to achieve adequate governance schemes.
3. **Planning around care:** taking into account the needs of people and especially the voice of women, in all their diversity, planning from the people's point of view is essential.
4. **Ensuring financing:** which includes the provision of public services and goes beyond, focusing on the allocation of resources aimed at the well-being of caregivers and those who require care. Moving from the logic of services to the logic of people.
5. **Existing and new infrastructure:** articulate and define a care infrastructure that responds to the needs of both caregivers and people in need of care.
6. **Measuring impact:** concrete data about how local policies of care can change the lives of the most vulnerable, telling the story and communicating better how cities are making a difference.

7. **Focus on caregivers:** including strategies as respite care programs designed to provide temporary relief and support to caregivers. These strategies allow them to have free time for themselves, to study, work and for self-care.
8. **Partnerships:** encouraging collaboration among various stakeholders, including governments, employers and civil society, can help to identify and address the needs of caregivers as well as to develop of comprehensive policies, initiatives, and support systems. The active role of the private sector is crucial in implementing policies on maternity and parental leave, breastfeeding, incentives, labor flexibility, among others.

A good practice developed UNDP's Gender Team at the Regional Hub for Latin America and the Caribbean has been the **Care Georeferencing Tool** which aims to facilitate the construction of care maps, a key step during the design of comprehensive care policies and systems at the national and local level.

This tool addresses the mapping of the supply of care, from the public, private, family and community spheres, the demand for care, identifying the location of those who require care, and the gaps between supply and demand at the territorial level. The tool, used in the Bogotá's Care System, incorporates traditional data sources including administrative records, census data, surveys with innovative data sources like big data, crowd mapping, collaborative mapping. The tool is flexible and adapts to the needs of the project.

UNDP's Caring Cities strategy identifies good practices and experiences; generates knowledge about the latest local development trends and collect data about city innovations towards care to upscale and replicate such innovations. We are building a global learning network on Caring Cities and SDGs, generating and sharing knowledge about how cities are developing new inclusive caring services.