

## GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR CARE: AN URGENT CALL TO ACTION

### Background and Context

The Generation Equality Forum 2021 has reminded the world of the relevance of the commitments made in Beijing 26 years ago, updating them in the framework of the COVID 19 pandemic and with the challenges that this 21st century poses for the lives of girls and women. This Global Forum has given us a new impetus to move forward and urgently reduce the gender inequality gaps that impede the full and free development of women and girls in all corners of the planet. The Generation Equality Action Coalition on Economic Justice and Rights has been designed to respond to critical constraints women and girls face in the economy by advancing bold, game-changing actions in four interdependent areas by 2026, i.e., the care economy, decent work, productive resources, and inclusive economies and stimulus packages. While anchoring these Actions in the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Commission on the Status of Women and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Action Coalition integrates clear and measurable strategies for mitigating the negative socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and proposes a post-COVID-19 economic recovery that advances gender equality and women's human rights.

To this end, in the framework of the Generation Equality Forum, Mexico, as co-host and leader of the Action Coalition on Economic Justice and Rights, through the National Institute for Women (INMUJERES) of Mexico, and UN Women Mexico have launched the **Global Alliance for Care**, a collective commitment critical to mobilizing global action towards the care economy Action Area of the Action Coalition. The Global Alliance for Care builds on care and domestic work being an essential, universal need that contributes to individual and household well-being, social development and economic growth, yet is often unrecognized and undervalued.

Care is primarily provided by women and girls who spend triple the amount of time on unpaid and domestic work than men and boys. Gendered norms help keep this unequal division of labour in place and has important implications for gender equality. The overload and disproportionate distribution of care work directly impact girls and women around the world, hindering and interrupting their life potential. The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the fragility of care work arrangements, societies dependence on unpaid care and the disproportionate reliance on women and girls. This pandemic has also shown that the current economic and social model has proven ineffective in closing inequality gaps between women and men as it exacerbates social differences at all levels. The labour conditions of care workers have become more precarious, and at the same time their work has become even more essential.

The United Nations Secretary-General has described inequality as the defining challenge of our era, one that the COVID-19 crisis has thrown into even greater relief and has recommended governments to seize this crisis as an opportunity to build back better, strengthening social protection and public services and implementing gender-responsive economic policies. In response to this call, and in order to achieve long-term economic rights for women and girls and socio-cultural shift of gender roles, the Global Alliance for Care seeks to build back better by placing the care economy at the centre of the COVID-19 response to recover faster with an inclusive approach ensuring *no one is left behind*. The National Institute for Women



in Mexico and UN Women are proposing the Alliance to help accelerate progress towards the achievement of SDG Target 5.4, and can be used as an instrument of the Action Coalition's Action on the care economy to advance progress towards the quantitative goals set in the Action Coalition's Global Acceleration Plan.

### Conceptual Principles of the Alliance for Care

The Global Alliance for Care, put forward by the National Institute for Women of Mexico and UN Women, will operate under four priority principles that frame its actions as follows:

1. **The responsibility of the State** as the main guarantor of care: guaranteeing the provision of quality public care services; ensuring adequate public funding for care systems as a whole and ensuring compliance with standards by other providers, and the shared responsibility of private sector and communities in care systems.
2. **Care as a public good** which is critical for sustaining families and communities, for achieving economic prosperity and ensuring social cohesion that must be value and redistribute in order to build peace, development, economic growth, and well-being for society and families. In order to do this, we must build integrated and resilient care systems to be assumed as a collective responsibility with greater co-responsibility between States, families, the private sector, civil society and communities.
3. **Care as a right (the right to care and be cared for)**. The sustainable and pacific development of countries depends on incorporating women and girls into all areas of life under conditions of equal access and opportunities: guaranteeing and providing care is an investment in the economic growth of the countries and in women's economic empowerment ensuring women's and girls' rights. Therefore, the **rights of caregivers and care receivers** must be formally recognized and care systems must be geared towards their realization.
4. **Monitoring and evaluation** of the availability, accessibility, affordability and quality of care services is necessary to measure the progress in national care systems and guaranteeing these four critical spheres of care in order to reduce gender inequalities in the framework of human rights, also recognizing and making visible the different forms of community organization of care work and the particular needs, diversity of history, cultures and territories.

### An Urgent Call to Action on Care

At the **global level**, the Global Alliance for Care will include multi-stakeholder global and national commitments, among other:

1. Implement concrete actions from States, families, communities, and the private sector to develop and increase care services such as community care models; child-care facilities; centres for adolescents; care for people with disabilities; day centres as well as continued monitoring and care



facilitation for the elderly, remote assistance, care work, professionalization, and support programs for caregivers, among others.

2. Promote public policies for reconciling personal, family and work-life with flexible hours, equalizing maternal and parental leave, extending accessibility to those in informal employment and well as labor-precarious situations, and strengthening transformative actions that results in cultural change on gender stereotypes that reaffirm that women should be the main care providers.
3. Promote reforms to recognize the rights of caregivers and care receivers and implement actions to protect fundamental labour rights and improving working conditions of care workers.
4. Promote transformative actions such as awareness campaigns on the co-responsibility of care, eradicating the stereotyped idea of women as responsible for this work.
5. Promote investment in social and physical care infrastructure, so that care services address diverse needs on an equal basis.
6. Promote the generation of data and evidence including costing studies focused on the investment return for the extension of care services to achieve their universality; service mapping, needs assessments, and impact studies, crucial for monitoring and evaluation.
7. Development of community practices in matters of care work that result in a bank of exchanging experiences including urban, community and neighbourhood experiences; certification models for caregivers and professional paths by modules and by technical careers.
8. Expand the fiscal space for the gradual and progressive financing of a universal and sustainable Care System.

### **National commitments**

To advance concrete action towards the above stated goals, at the **national level**, INMUJERES, in alliance with UN Women Mexico, is committed to:

1. Establish the foundations for a national care work system that allows the coordination and articulation of a comprehensive national policy, including systematic cost analysis for progressiveness in universal coverage of care services in Mexico.
2. Establish a normative framework to guarantee the right to care and to be cared for as a human right by bestowing benefits and entitlements to care receivers and care givers, thus creating tools and resources for care work to exist as a choice as opposed to an obligation.
3. Launching a transformative awareness and socialization campaign around care work in Mexico.



These actions will allow, on the one hand, to transform culture, reduce inequalities by guaranteeing the recognition, reduction and redistribution of domestic and care work between co-responsible actors: State, families, communities and Private Sector. On the other hand, they will make it possible to progressively increase the number and quality of services to care for the population in a situation of dependency while boosting the care sector labour market, the promotion of decent work and the correction of precarity of care and domestic work. Through practices of regulation and quality standards of practice, the State will work to guarantee the rights of caregivers. With this commitment in Mexico, the expansion of a childcare system considering a 5-year implementation period has an average annual fiscal cost of 1.16% of the GDP of 2019 which would lead to a total increase in the gross value of production annual average of 1.77%, and a total increase in employment, an annual average of 3.9% (UN Women, 2020). The care economy is an effective and efficient way for the generation of quality jobs as well as for the positive impact on the economic reactivation in the context of the COVID-19 crisis. All this within the framework of the highest international standards on human rights.

### CALL TO ACTION

**The Global Alliance for care calls other countries; governments; the private sector; academy; civil society organizations; international organizations and other UN agencies to join efforts on this regard. An engagement strategy and criteria for join the alliance will be developed shortly.**

*What does it mean to join as an ally?*

The allied parties, as members of the Global Alliance for Care, constitute the core of the efforts and achievements of this initiative through their commitment expressed in concrete actions, financing and collaboration from the different areas of impact.

In addition to contributing to the valuable work of this Global Alliance, membership provides a number of benefits including:

- Access to selected research, data and best practices in the matter, as well as cost studies focused on investment, mapping of services, evaluations and impact studies.
- Opportunities for the exchange of knowledge and the creation of networks through the development of community practices in the matter of care work that result in an exchange bank to strengthen networks and commitments from a multilevel and multistakeholder action.
- Be part of a global communication strategy that promotes transformative actions such as awareness campaigns on the co-responsibility of care, to eradicate the stereotypical idea of women as responsible for care and the support and development of life; as well as promoting the right to care and be cared for.

