

INTERNATIONAL LABOR ORGANIZATION (ILO)
FEBRUARY 9 - 13

wfuna



World Federation of United Nations Associations

WFUNA

Email: wimun@wfuna.org

Phone: +41 (0) 22 917 32 74

Instagram: @wimunsecretariat

WIMUN NEW YORK 2026

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

DECENT WORK AND THE CARE ECONOMY

Simulation: International Labour Organisation

Welcome to WIMUN New York 2026,

We are very pleased to introduce you to the most authentic simulation of the International Labour Organisation in the world; and hope to contribute to your understanding of the organisation, its mandate, and its critical role in global affairs.

Through a series of pre-conference webinars that will be offered and documents – like this resource guide – we aim to educate you not only about the global issues on the UN agenda, but also about the ways and means through which those topics are discussed, debated and negotiated by real UN diplomats.

This resource guide will provide you with a head start in doing research to gain a deeper understanding of the global issue that you will be discussing and the actions that the government you have been assigned recommends that the international community should take to address this issue. To make the research process a bit easier, the resource guide has been divided into sections and sub-sections to assist you in researching these two components. We strongly recommend you to give a careful look through the sources listed below so that the interaction with your peers is as exciting as possible.

We wish you all the very best in this journey of learning!

TOPIC DESCRIPTION

The care economy encompasses a broad spectrum of activities, including both paid and unpaid care work, such as childcare, eldercare, health and social care services, education, and domestic work. These activities are indispensable to the functioning of societies and the sustainability of economies, upholding the wellbeing and productivity of populations and enabling the participation of others in the labour market.

Despite its essential contribution, the care economy remains undervalued and underprioritized within economic and labour policy frameworks. Globally, unpaid care work is estimated to contribute over USD 11 trillion annually, representing approximately 9% of global GDP, while paid care work accounts for around 11.5% of total employment. However, significant gender disparities persist: women undertake more than 76% of unpaid care responsibilities and constitute approximately two-thirds of the paid care workforce, frequently in conditions characterised by informality, low wages, limited labour rights, and inadequate social protection.

The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the structural vulnerabilities within the care sector, amplifying the unpaid care burden on women and girls while exposing paid care workers to heightened occupational risks without commensurate protections. These challenges are compounded by demographic trends, including ageing populations and shifts in family structures, which will continue to increase the demand for care services worldwide.

The expansion of the care economy presents a unique opportunity to generate employment, advance gender equality, and support inclusive economic growth. At the same time, it poses complex policy considerations regarding the quality of employment within the sector, fair remuneration, occupational safety and health standards, and the formalization of care work. The International Labour Organization (ILO), through instruments such as the 5R Framework – Recognize, Reduce, and Redistribute unpaid care work, Reward care work, and ensure Representation for care workers – offers a comprehensive policy approach to addressing these multidimensional issues.

The care economy intersects with broader areas of social protection, labour market policies, gender equality, migration, and sustainable development. As such, it carries significant implications for economic resilience, social cohesion, and the achievement of internationally agreed Sustainable Development Goals.

In this regard, the care economy emerges not only as a sector requiring targeted policy attention, but also as a transformative element within national and global development agendas, shaping pathways towards more equitable, inclusive, and sustainable societies.

Key Points and Main Issues

Ensuring decent work in the care economy is both an urgent and complex challenge that lies at the intersection of social justice, gender equality, and economic sustainability. The care economy includes a wide range of paid and unpaid activities that are essential to supporting individuals and communities across the life cycle. However, care work remains structurally undervalued, highly gendered, and often informal. As such, the transition towards a more just and inclusive care economy requires strong policy coordination, sustained investment, and inclusive dialogue across sectors. Within the ILO's tripartite structure, workers, employers, and governments express a variety of overlapping and diverging concerns about how to advance decent work in the care economy.

Workers' Concerns

- **Lack of Recognition and Representation**
 - Care workers, especially in unpaid or informal settings, are often excluded from legal frameworks, labour statistics, and policy dialogue.
 - Workers call for the recognition of care work as economically valuable and the inclusion of care workers in decision-making processes.
- **Poor Working Conditions and Informality**
 - Many care workers face low wages, long hours, limited occupational safety, and no access to social protection or contracts.
 - Informality is especially prevalent in domestic and home-based care, where labour laws are rarely enforced.
- **Gender Inequality and Unpaid Work**
 - Women continue to carry out the vast majority of unpaid care work, which restricts their participation in paid employment and leadership roles.
 - Workers demand investment in public care services and family-friendly policies that reduce and redistribute unpaid responsibilities.
- **Vulnerability of Migrant and Domestic Workers**
 - Migrant care workers often face discrimination, isolation, and exclusion from social protection systems.
 - Domestic workers remain among the least protected in many legal systems, with limited enforcement of existing rights.

Employers' Concerns

- **Cost and Administrative Burden of Formalization**
 - Employers, particularly small-scale providers and private households, are concerned about the financial and bureaucratic impacts of formalizing employment relationships in the care sector.
 - New regulations around wages, hours, and benefits may strain employers with limited capacity.

Key Points and Main Issues (cont.)

- **Need for Flexibility in Service Delivery**
 - Employers stress the importance of operational flexibility to meet diverse and unpredictable care needs.
 - They advocate for adaptable compliance frameworks that accommodate both institutional and home-based care contexts.
- **Skills and Quality Assurance**
 - Many employers support professionalization but seek affordable training and certification systems.
 - There is interest in partnerships that enhance service quality without significantly increasing costs.
- **Supporting Workforce Participation**
 - Employers in all sectors recognize that access to care services can improve productivity and retention, particularly for women workers.
 - They may support investments in care infrastructure if responsibilities and costs are fairly distributed.

Governments' Concerns

- **Financing and Investment Prioritization**
 - Expanding public care systems requires sustained financial commitment, but governments face fiscal constraints and competing demands.
 - Some governments seek innovative models—including public–private partnerships or international support—to scale care infrastructure.
- **Integration into Economic and Labour Policy**
 - Care work is insufficiently reflected in national accounts, making it difficult to develop effective policies.
 - Governments seek guidance on data collection, time-use surveys, and care-specific indicators.
- **Demographic and Social Pressures**
 - Aging populations and changing family structures are increasing demand for long-term and intergenerational care.
 - Governments must address this growing need while managing migration, urbanization, and care worker shortages.
- **Gender Equality and Social Protection**
 - Governments support efforts to reduce gender gaps in employment and income but face cultural and political obstacles in implementing redistribution policies.
 - Strengthening social protection for both care receivers and care providers is a rising policy priority.

Key Points and Main Issues (cont.)

- **International Migration and Regulation**

- Many governments rely on migrant care workers to meet labour shortages but struggle to regulate recruitment practices and ensure fair working conditions.
- Coordination between sending and receiving countries is often limited, leading to gaps in rights and protections.

Workers' and Employers' Perspectives

While both workers and employers recognize the centrality of care work to functioning economies and social cohesion, their priorities diverge in implementation. Workers emphasize the urgency of formalizing care jobs, ensuring minimum labour standards, and recognizing unpaid work within social protection systems. They argue that care work must be treated as a public good, not a private burden. Employers, by contrast, typically focus on the flexibility of implementation, cost-sharing mechanisms, and the need for scalable, affordable training systems that don't disrupt business viability. The friction lies primarily in the pace and scope of change: workers tend to advocate for structural reform, while employers may prefer gradual adjustments and incentive-based models.

Developed Countries

Delegates from high-income countries are likely to focus on the reorganization of aging care systems, increasing labour force participation among women, and the need to regulate growing reliance on migrant care workers. With some infrastructure already in place, their challenges revolve around quality, accessibility, and equity. They may advocate for measures like universal long-term care, professionalization, and digital innovation in care delivery. However, they may be more reluctant to commit to international funding or migration reform unless clearly tied to their own labour shortages and demographic pressures.

Developing Countries

Delegations from low- and middle-income countries are expected to place greater emphasis on building care systems from the ground up, often in contexts marked by informality, limited physical space, and deep gender inequalities. They may seek support to integrate care into national development strategies, extend protections to informal care workers, and build public infrastructure for early childhood and elder care. These countries are also origin points for many migrant care workers, making them especially interested in fair recruitment, bilateral labour agreements, and social protection portability. Many will argue that investment in the care economy is not only a gender issue, but a pathway to economic recovery, poverty reduction, and job creation.

Employment-intensive investments for advancing decent work in the care economy

2025

Summary: The ILO argues that countries can meet fast-growing care needs and create millions of decent jobs by using employment-intensive investments (EIs) not only for roads and buildings, but also for the care economy (childcare, elder care, disability support, community health). It shows three ways EIs can help: (1) support workers with care duties—through paid care leave, childcare at or near worksites, safe jobs for pregnant and nursing workers, flexible hours; (2) build care infrastructure—such as childcare centers, long-term care facilities, accessible transport, and safe public spaces that also reduce unpaid care time; and (3) treat care as a funded sector of work, creating formal, skilled jobs with fair pay and protections. The brief links these steps to gender equality (since women do most unpaid care), crisis resilience, green design, and local job creation. It stresses decent work standards, social safeguards, and involvement of employers' and workers' organizations. Done well, EIs in care can expand access to services, raise women's employment, and strengthen communities.

Time for Care in Latin America and the Caribbean **2025**

Summary: This joint ECLAC–ILO publication encourages governments in the region to adopt care policies—such as parental leave and long-term care services—as a means to promote gender equality and sustainable development. These examples provide valuable guidance for designing effective national policies that respond to the region's care needs.

[Advancing the Care Economy in Türkiye](#)

2025

Summary: A five-day training organized in Ankara brought together representatives from government, trade unions, UN agencies, and civil society to deepen Turkey's approach to a stronger care economy. The workshop explored frameworks like the 5R model (recognize, reduce, redistribute, reward, represent), policies for care-friendly workplaces, and strategies to draft a national roadmap for inclusive care. The initiative is part of the UN Joint Programme on Transformative Growth of the Care Economy in Türkiye, jointly led by ILO Türkiye and ITCILO and supported by UN agencies. The goal is to embed care as essential social infrastructure—strengthening decent work, gender equality, and resilience—while promoting inclusive growth and contributing to SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 8 (Decent Work).

[Advancing the Measurement of Care Work and the Care Economy](#)

2024

Summary: This ILO blog post highlights current efforts to standardize international measurements of care work through improved time-use surveys. It underlines the importance of data in making unpaid care work visible in national accounts and policy frameworks.

[Report of the General Discussion Committee on Decent Work and the Care Economy](#)

2024

Summary: On August 2, 2024, the General Discussion Committee at the 112th Session of the International Labour Conference addressed Decent Work and the Care Economy. The discussion highlighted the care economy's importance for a healthy and productive workforce, enhancing enterprise competitiveness. The ILO's leadership role in promoting decent work within the care economy, utilizing a life-course approach, was also discussed. The record of this meeting contains summaries of statements made by the representatives of the Workers, Employers and Governments. It is one of the best resources for understanding the positions taken by each group on actions that need to be taken to realize the potential of the care economy in achieving gender equality.

Decent work and the care economy

2024

Summary: The ILO's Decent Work and the Care Economy report highlights how investing in care work—both paid and unpaid—can advance gender equality, create decent jobs, and strengthen societies. It presents the ILO's framework for understanding the care economy and calls for better data, fair labor standards, and social protection for care workers. The report reviews global and national policies on labor, social protection, and migration, showing how decent work for care workers leads to better quality care. It emphasizes integrated policies that recognize, reduce, and redistribute unpaid care work while ensuring rights, collective bargaining, and financial investment in care systems. Overall, it positions the care economy as essential for sustainable development and gender equality and outlines future ILO actions to build stronger, fairer care systems worldwide.

ILC 2024 General Discussion on Decent Work and the Care Economy

2024

Summary: This is a video from the International Labor Organization on the General discussion on what Decent Work and the Care Economy. The 112th session highlights the need for comprehensive data to ensure work is recognized, and integrated into economic and social policy planning.

Care: A critical investment for gender equality and the rights of women and girls

2024

Summary: UN Women’s statement highlights the urgent need to recognize and invest in the care economy as a cornerstone of gender equality and human rights. It points out that women and girls perform over 2.5 times more unpaid care work than men, with the most marginalized women—those living in poverty, migrants, and informal workers—bearing the heaviest burden. This imbalance keeps women out of paid work, limits their opportunities, and drives gender inequality and poverty.

UN Women calls for governments to treat care as essential infrastructure by developing comprehensive national care systems that create decent jobs, reduce women’s unpaid workload, and boost economic growth. Investing in care, it notes, could create nearly 300 million jobs by 2035. The statement celebrates countries such as Colombia, Panama, Brazil, Chile, Kenya, the Philippines, Spain, and Canada for taking legislative and policy steps toward stronger care systems. The statement urges bold global action through partnerships like the Global Alliance for Care and Generation Equality Action Coalitions, emphasizing that care work is both a human rights and an economic issue. As the world nears the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, UN Women calls for ending the undervaluation of care work and building equitable, sustainable societies where “equal is greater.”

Bridging Gender Gaps with a Sustainable Care Economy: Investment Opportunities and Challenges

2024

Summary: The UNDP brief highlights how the COVID-19 pandemic exposed the global care crisis and the unequal burden on women, who perform over 76% of unpaid domestic and caregiving work. As ageing populations and new social needs increase care demands, countries must invest in a sustainable care economy—one that provides paid, high-quality, and accessible care while reducing and redistributing unpaid work. Using China as a case study, the report identifies major barriers such as low wages, limited training, fragmented services, and cultural norms that treat caregiving as women’s work. It calls for policies and private-sector partnerships that improve regulation, protect workers, and expand equitable access, especially in rural areas. Investing in care is not just social policy—it creates jobs, supports gender equality, and strengthens economies. Technology, development finance, and better governance can help transform care into a driver of sustainable and inclusive growth.

Policy Brief on Care Economy – UN Women Africa

2024

Summary: This policy brief outlines the importance of recognizing, reducing, and redistributing unpaid care work in Africa. It presents recommendations for governments to promote public investment in care infrastructure and inclusive labour policies. These recommendations are valuable even for countries outside of Africa, as they address global challenges related to gender equality and inclusive economic development.

United Nations Joint Programme on Transformative Growth of the Care Economy in Türkiye

2024

Summary: The programme, funded by the Joint SDG Fund and coordinated with UN agencies and Türkiye's Ministry of Family and Social Services, seeks to expand and transform Türkiye's care economy. The United Nations Joint Programme on Transformative Growth of the Care Economy in Türkiye works to build a stronger and fairer care system in the country. It brings together the UN, the Turkish government, civil society, and the private sector to make care services—such as childcare, elder care, and disability support—more available and better quality.

The program helps improve working conditions for care workers and encourages new care models that combine public and private support. It also uses digital tools to help people live more independently and designs new ways to fund care services.

By investing in care, the program aims to create decent jobs, support gender equality, and make sure everyone—especially women, children, older people, and people with disabilities—can access the care they need. It runs from October 2024 to October 2025.

[Gender Equality and the Care Economy: The 5Rs of Decent Care Work: Recognise, Reduce, Redistribute Unpaid Care Work and Represent Paid Care Work](#)

2024

Summary: The article reports on a high-level dialogue in Barbados about unpaid and paid care work using the framework of the 5Rs: Recognise, Reduce, Redistribute, Represent, and Reward. It shows data revealing that women globally do about 75% of unpaid care work—on average 4h25m per day versus 1h23m for men. In Barbados, women spend nearly 2.5 times more time on childcare and almost three times more when combined with domestic and adult care. Speakers called for greater policy attention and investment in the care economy, arguing that fair remuneration, redistribution of care responsibilities, and better recognition are essential. They also emphasized that care work powerfully links to social equality, economic participation for women, and stronger, healthier families and communities.

[The Care Society: Acting Today for a Better Future](#)

2024

Summary: This article outlines the principles behind a "Care Society" approach in Latin America, advocating for structural change that places care at the center of social and economic recovery. While these principles are rooted in Latin America, they offer valuable guidance for all countries seeking to build a more inclusive and sustainable care economy.

[Policy Brief on Care Economy – UN Women Africa](#)

2024

Summary: This policy brief outlines the importance of recognizing, reducing, and redistributing unpaid care work in Africa. It presents recommendations for governments to promote public investment in care infrastructure and inclusive labour policies. These recommendations are valuable even for countries outside of Africa, as they address global challenges related to gender equality and inclusive economic development.

[From a care economy to a care society - How the UN talks about care and why it matters](#)

2023

Summary: The article argues that the pandemic exposed how much societies rely on unpaid care work—primarily carried out by women—and calls for moving beyond seeing care only as an “economy” toward building a full “care society.” It emphasizes that care work should be viewed as a public good tied to human rights, not merely a market service. UNICEF highlights frameworks such as the 5R approach (recognise, reduce, redistribute, reward, represent) and the need for public investment in infrastructure and services that support caregivers and care recipients. It warns against purely economic arguments for care (e.g. “return on investment”) that risk sidelining those whose care needs are not profit-driven (e.g. older people, persons with disabilities). The article calls for integrated policies that value care for all life stages and situates care at the heart of decisions about justice, equality, and sustainability.

[Roadmap Care Economy and Health Workers](#)

2023

Summary: The care economy, which includes all workers in the education, health, and social work sectors, as well as domestic workers, is crucial to a thriving, healthy society and to decent work. Often, the wages, conditions, and hours for care workers are less than ideal. The Global Accelerator who published this brief aims to change this by promoting decent jobs and advocating for fair conditions for workers in the care economy.

Pathways Towards Decent Work in the Digitally Enabled Care Economy in Southeast Asia **2023**

Summary: This report published by UN Women argues that digital technologies offer a powerful opportunity to transform the care economy—the system of paid and unpaid caregiving—in Asia and the Pacific. It discusses how combining digital tools with care services can reduce women’s unpaid care burden, create decent care jobs, and make care more accessible and affordable. The summary emphasizes that such change must not worsen inequality; it requires careful design with gender equality, inclusion, and rights-based governance at the core. It offers recommendations for policymakers: investing in digital infrastructure in underserved areas, ensuring digital literacy, enacting data protection laws, supporting caregivers through training and fair compensation, and fostering public-private partnerships that keep control with public institutions.

Transforming Care Systems in West and Central Africa **2023**

Summary: This UN Women publication discusses strategies to transform care systems by improving access to services, strengthening legal protections, and encouraging shared caregiving responsibilities within families and communities.

Unlocking the Potential: Investing in Uzbekistan's Care Economy for Societal Well- Being and Economic Growth

2023

Summary: This UNDP report looks at how improving the country's care sector can support both gender equality and economic growth. Women in Uzbekistan do most of the unpaid work at home — caring for children, the elderly, and people with disabilities. This limits their chances to earn an income or build a career. The report argues that when governments invest in affordable childcare, eldercare, and training for care workers, it frees women to work, creates jobs, and improves community well-being. It recommends that Uzbekistan make the care sector a central part of its national development plans. This includes improving working conditions and pay for care workers, funding new care centers in both cities and rural areas, and protecting care workers' rights. The report also stresses that care work should be seen as essential infrastructure — as important as roads or schools — because it supports families, strengthens the economy, and helps achieve gender equality.

Where Women Work: Female-Dominated Occupations and Sectors

2023

Summary: This publication provides an overview of occupational segregation by gender, underscoring how women are disproportionately concentrated in underpaid and undervalued care-related sectors.

Transforming Care Systems in West and Central Africa

2023

Summary: This UN Women publication discusses strategies to transform care systems by improving access to services, strengthening legal protections, and encouraging shared caregiving responsibilities within families and communities.

[Women Spend Twice as Much Time as Men on Unpaid Care Work in Bosnia and Herzegovina](#)

2022

Summary: This article explores the gendered distribution of care responsibilities in the Western Balkans and highlights the need for national policies that promote shared caregiving and formal care services. This article also is supported with a policy brief that provides a detailed analysis and offers concrete policy recommendations.

[A toolkit on paid and unpaid care work: From 3Rs to 5Rs](#)

2022

Summary: This toolkit builds on the original "Toolkit on recognizing, reducing and redistributing unpaid work and care," a product of the 2017 UN Secretary General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment. This updated toolkit follows the International Labour Organization's "5R framework for decent care work": Recognize, reduce, and redistribute unpaid care work, and reward and represent paid care work by promoting decent work for care workers and guaranteeing their representation, social dialogue, and collective bargaining. It serves as an introductory reference, or "how-to guide," for those working on care as a means to achieve gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls, and the Sustainable Development Goals and to promote the rights and wellbeing of care providers.

[Millions of hours spent daily on unpaid work: evidence from Asia and the Pacific](#)

2020

Summary: This ILO blog post presents time-use data revealing the scale of unpaid care work in the region and calls for greater policy attention to reduce gender disparities in unpaid labour. For many youth, time spent on household work means time spent away from education, limiting the youths opportunities for personal and economic development.

Why Invest In The Care Economy

2024

Summary: This policy brief by the EU4Gender Equality programme highlights the urgent need for governments to recognize and redistribute unpaid and undervalued care work which mostly falls on women. This policy brief gives examples on policy that governments should implement in order to reduce the disproportionate burden of unpaid care work on women and promote greater gender equality.

Care at work in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Investing in care leave and services for a more gender equal world of work

2023

Summary: This publication provided a detailed overview of care policies across the MENA region, highlighting what specific countries have done to implement care policies. It outlines the current state of the care economy by comparing national laws to ILO standards, showing where countries have made progress and where major legal and policy gaps remain.

Care Economy BRICS White Paper

2024

Summary: This White Paper produced by BRICS members recognizes care work as vital to economic and social well-being, highlighting successful strategies across BRICS countries and showcasing best practices ranging from care infrastructure to gender equality and caregiver support.

Investing in care leave and services for a more gender equal world of work in the European Union

2023

Summary: This ILO publication analyzes the persistent childcare policy gaps in EU-27 countries, showing the disconnect between the end of paid childcare related leave and the start of free, universal early childhood education. It also outlines a pathway forward by recommending actions that could be taken by EU-27 member countries.

112th ILC - General discussion Committee on Decent Work and the Care Economy (CDG) - Discussion point 3 - EU Statement

2024

Summary: In this speech to the 112th International Labour Conference, the European Union emphasized the need for a global, human rights-based approach to the care economy. It calls on the ILO to play an essential role in promoting international labour standards and supporting coherent, evidence-based care policies.

[See the [Report of the General Discussion Committee on Decent Work and the Care Economy](#) for many more summaries of statements made by representatives of workers, employers and governments.]

Why Invest In The Care Economy_

2024

Summary: This policy brief by the EU4Gender Equality programme highlights the urgent need for governments to recognize and redistribute unpaid and undervalued care work which mostly falls on women. This policy brief gives examples on policy that governments should implement in order to reduce the disproportionate burden of unpaid care work on women and promote greater gender equality.

[The Global Roadmap For Action on the Care Economy](#)

2024

Summary: This roadmap outlines a global framework for action on the care economy offering governments practical steps to invest in care systems, strengthen labor protection, and reduce unpaid care burdens. It is intended for global application but offers guidance for individual countries aiming to develop sustainable and inclusive care systems. The roadmap offers a global definition of care work, addressing a key barrier that has hindered many governments from effectively developing and implementing care-related policies.

[Global Health & Gender Policy Brief: The Global Care Economy](#)

2022

Summary: This policy brief describes the critical role of care work revealed during the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasizing the disproportionate burden placed on women. It offers target policy suggestions and provides context on why governments should act to strengthen and invest in the care economy.

[Unpaid Care work](#)

2022

Summary: This video provides a brief background on the care economy and its impacts, particularly highlighting the rapidly ageing population in the Asia-Pacific region. It concludes with policy recommendations aimed at addressing these challenges.
