

GUIDANCE NOTE

CARE, CLIMATE AND A JUST TRANSITION

GUIDANCE NOTE FOR UN WOMEN AND PARTNERS

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Economic Empowerment Section
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ACRONYMS

ASEAN:	Association of Southeast Asian Nations	M&E:	Monitoring and Evaluation
AI:	Artificial Intelligence	MENA:	Middle East and North Africa
BAM:	Belém Action Mechanism for Just Transition	NAP:	National Adaptation Plan
CBD:	Convention on Biological Diversity	NBSAP:	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
CEDAW:	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women	NDC:	Nationally Determined Contribution
COP:	Conference of the Parties	NELD:	Non-Economic Loss and Damage
CSW:	Commission on the Status of Women	OECD:	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
CWG:	Care Working Group	SAARC:	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
ECLAC:	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean	SIDS:	Small Island Developing States
EMG:	Environmental Management Group	UNCCD:	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
FACJ:	Feminist Action for Climate Justice	UNCT:	UN Country Team
GAP:	Gender Action Plan	UNDP:	United Nations Development Programme
GBV:	Gender-Based Violence	UNDRR:	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
GCF:	Green Climate Fund	UNEP:	United Nations Environment Programme
GEDA:	Gender Environment Data Alliance	UNFCCC:	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
GEAP:	Gender Equality Acceleration Plan	UNFPA:	United Nations Population Fund
GPA:	Gender Plan of Action	UNICEF:	United Nations Children's Fund
GTG:	Gender Theme Group	UNRISD:	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
HQ:	Headquarters	WCARO:	West and Central Africa Regional Office
IANWGE:	Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality	WEDO:	Women's Environment and Development Organization
IDRC:	International Development Research Centre	WEE:	Women's Economic Empowerment
ILO:	International Labour Organization	WPS:	Women, Peace and Security
IPBES:	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services	WWF:	World Wide Fund for Nature
LAC:	Latin America and the Caribbean	6Rs:	Recognize, Reduce, Redistribute, Reward, Represent, Resource
LMIC:	Low- And Middle-Income Countries		

GLOSSARY

Care economy:

The sub-area of economic activities involved in the production and consumption of care services, including both unpaid and paid care work.¹

Care infrastructure:

The services that directly provide care to people, and the basic physical infrastructure that indirectly supports care outcomes. Care infrastructure creates and maintains environments that support both care recipients and caregivers. Care services, such as healthcare, early childhood and development centres, care services for older persons, and support services for persons with disabilities, are critical for providing quality care for those who require it and to more equitably redistributing the responsibility for unpaid direct care work between households, the state and the market, and between women and men, girls and boys.²

Care services:

Publicly or privately provided services (often employing a paid care worker) that support the care of people at different life stages and with different care needs, including childcare, early childhood education, healthcare, and support for older persons and persons with disabilities. The quality, accessibility and affordability of care services shape how care responsibilities are distributed across households, communities and public institutions.

Care system:

The set of components through which care is organized and delivered in a given society, encompassing legal and policy frameworks, services, financing, social and physical infrastructure, programmes, standards and training, governance and administration, etc., within the social norms and structure specific to the context. A comprehensive care system involves these components working in an integrated and deliberate way, with the aim of implementing a new social organization of care.³

Care work:

Encompasses **direct** care for people (e.g. physical, emotional, psychological and developmental care for children, older persons, persons with disabilities, sick family members), and **indirect** care that enables well-being (e.g. cooking, cleaning, washing, fetching water and firewood). Care work takes place within households, communities and institutions, and can either be **unpaid or paid**. This Guidance Note takes an expansive conceptualization and definition of care work that includes the act of caring for oneself, for others, and for the planet.⁴

The care–climate nexus:

How care systems interact with climate change, environmental degradation and biodiversity loss. This Guidance Note uses the term as shorthand for the full range of interlinkages between care systems and the triple planetary crisis (climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, and, for the purposes of this paper, wider environmental degradation,⁵ which further compounds the crisis; see definition of environmental degradation below).

Climate justice and feminist climate justice:

Climate justice foregrounds the moral and ethical dimensions of climate change, centring the people and communities that have contributed least to global greenhouse gas emissions yet face the most severe consequences of climate change. Feminist climate justice brings a gender lens to this frame, showing how the structural drivers of climate change and environmental degradation deepen gender inequalities and the differential impacts from intersecting marginalization. It advocates for climate solutions that transform discriminatory social and economic norms, underpinned by feminist principles of interdependence and intersectionality. These principles distinguish the vision of feminist climate justice from other justice-themed approaches based on binary oppositions, for example between humans and nature, dependence and autonomy, individual action and collective solidarity.⁶

Co-benefits:

Multiple positive outcomes that result from a single intervention across more than one domain. In the context of this Guidance Note, co-benefits refer to interventions that generate gains for both care systems and climate or environmental objectives, while realizing human rights and gender equality outcomes. For example, clean cooking energy programmes reduce women's time collecting fuel (a care-related benefit) while reducing household emissions (a climate benefit).

Ecosystem services:

The benefits people obtain from ecosystems. These include provisioning services such as food, water, timber and fibre; regulating services that affect climate, floods, disease, waste, and water quality; cultural services that provide recreational, aesthetic and spiritual benefits; and supporting services such as soil formation, photosynthesis and nutrient cycling.⁷

Environmental care:

Activities outside the household that are necessary for provisioning and subsistence, including tending to animals and plants, maintaining common spaces, managing natural resources, and sustaining ecosystems on which households depend.⁸

Environmental degradation:

The deterioration of the natural environment through the depletion or destruction of natural resources, ecosystems and biodiversity. For the purposes of this Guidance Note, environmental degradation encompasses biodiversity and nature loss, land degradation, and desertification, pollution and other forms of environmental damage addressed across the three Rio Conventions (see below).⁹

Gender-responsive just transition:

Just transitions towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all are critical to achieving social justice, decent work and poverty eradication, and to tackling environmental and climate change. The future of economies, societies, jobs and livelihoods depends on the planet's ecosystems and natural environments. A gender-responsive, just transition towards low-carbon, sustainable economies centres gender equality and the recognition of care in policies and programmes, to foster an economy that works for all people and the planet. It is an inclusive approach that addresses multiple, intersecting forms of discrimination.¹⁰

Heterodox, ecological and feminist economics:

Heterodox economics challenges the assumptions of neoclassical economics, including its narrow conception of value and its treatment of nature and social reproduction as externalities with no economic value. Ecological economics examines the relationship between economic activity and natural systems, arguing that human economies are embedded in and constrained by ecological limits, and that ecosystems provide essential life-support functions that conventional economic measures often fail to value adequately. Feminist economics brings a gender lens to economic analysis by demonstrating how unpaid and underpaid care work and the social reproduction of labour are foundational to economic life, despite being systematically undervalued and excluded from standard measures of economic activity. Together, these three fields of study provide the theoretical grounding for the care–climate nexus and share a core insight: the prevailing economic model treats both women's labour and the natural environment as if their supply were limitless and their use were costless, even though both are the foundation for all economies to function.¹¹

Intersectionality:

An analytical framework that understands social inequalities as complex, interlinked and mutually constitutive systems, encompassing gender, race, class, caste, disability, age, sexual orientation and gender identity, marital status, migration status and other dimensions of identity and structural position. An intersectional approach to the care–climate nexus recognizes that climate and care impacts do not fall uniformly on 'women' as a group, but are distributed unequally depending on a woman's income, location, ethnicity, disability status and other factors. This Guidance Note is grounded in an intersectional approach to women and girls in all their diversity, recognizing their differences and the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination they face.¹²

Rio Conventions:

The three landmark international treaties established at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, designed to protect life on earth: the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). These conventions provide legally binding frameworks for countries to cooperate on environmental issues, set global standards, and implement national strategies to protect ecosystems and natural resources. Each convention has its own normative architecture and gender action plans. This Guidance Note relates to all three conventions, moving beyond a siloed focus on climate change.¹³

PREFACE

Climate change, biodiversity loss and environmental degradation are increasing the demand for care while simultaneously weakening the systems that provide it. As water, food, fuel, health services and livelihoods come under greater pressure, care responsibilities increase and intensify. These impacts are felt most acutely by women and girls – who continue to provide the majority of unpaid care work and are heavily represented in paid care sectors – especially those in low-income households and rural communities in the Global South.

The global care crisis and the triple planetary crisis are deeply interconnected. Both reflect longstanding patterns in which care work and the natural environment have been undervalued, under-resourced and treated as inexhaustible. Yet these challenges are not only linked through their impacts. Solutions in one area can also strengthen outcomes in the other. Investing in care systems can support climate resilience, strengthen adaptation efforts, enable more inclusive and gender-responsive just transitions, and contribute to sustainable development. The urgency of addressing this nexus has never been greater.

This Guidance Note was developed to support UN Women, governments, civil society organizations, development partners and other practitioners working across care, climate, environmental and just transition agendas. It provides a practical framework for understanding the care–climate nexus and identifying opportunities for action across policy, programming, coordination, advocacy and financing.

Examples of such integration can already be seen in some national policy processes, community-level programme design, climate and environmental financing dialogues, and in care roadmaps that account for climate vulnerability. It is also taking place in global and regional normative processes, including the Belém Gender Action Plan, which names care work in UNFCCC decision outcomes for the first time,¹⁴ and in regional care frameworks in Latin America and the Caribbean that have begun to appreciate climate and environmental degradation as drivers of the care crisis.

Drawing on evidence, emerging research and examples from UN Women country, regional and global initiatives, this Guidance Note demonstrates how care and climate objectives can be advanced together. It explores the normative and policy frameworks, programmatic approaches, coordination mechanisms and financing opportunities that can help integrate care considerations into climate and environmental action, while also ensuring that care policies and investments respond to climate and environmental realities.

The Guidance Note offers a starting point for advancing care and climate objectives together, consistently and deliberately. The cost of continued fragmentation – of addressing care and climate as separate concerns – is measured in the widening gap between the scale of the crises we face and the strength of the systems built to respond to them. Closing that gap is both an urgent necessity and a genuine opportunity to foster more just, resilient and caring societies for people and the planet alike.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE AND AUDIENCE

This Guidance Note aims to support UN Women and partners to understand and address the interconnections between gender-responsive care systems and climate and environmental action across normative, operational and coordination functions. It is designed to help identify synergies across care, climate, environmental sustainability, resilience and just transition agendas.

Examples from UN Women country, regional and global teams provide insights into promising entry points, approaches and opportunities for addressing links between care systems, climate and the environment. While the Guidance Note is primarily

intended as a UN Women resource, it also aims to support partners working on these intersections across policy, programmes, coordination and partnerships at national, regional and global levels.

1.2 SCOPE

This Guidance Note addresses the full triple planetary crisis (climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution) and the interconnections between each of these dimensions and care systems. It covers all three Rio Conventions that address the crisis, and describes their distinct normative architecture and entry points for advocacy and programming to integrate care and climate responses. The guidance also draws on the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015–2030), which provides important normative grounding for understanding how disasters, increasingly driven by climate and environmental breakdown, impact women and girls as they destroy care infrastructure, displace care workers and intensify care workloads.

The Guidance Note addresses the full spectrum of care work, including unpaid labour of women and girls, paid care workers in health, education and social services, indirect care tasks that form the logistical backbone of household well-being, the direct, relational care that sustains human life, and environmental care (see glossary above for further descriptions of the spectrum of care work and environmental care). Environmental care is particularly relevant to this guidance because it sits at the intersection of care work and environmental stewardship, and because climate change and biodiversity loss directly increase these responsibilities.

Note on terminology: *For the sake of readability, the shorthand ‘climate’ is often used. This should be understood to encompass environmental degradation and biodiversity loss, unless a specific convention is named. The Guidance Note also uses the framing of ‘just transitions’ as a bridging concept across all three conventions, one that encompasses the economic, social and ecological shifts required to move towards low-carbon, environmentally sustainable economies in ways that are fair, inclusive, and leave no one behind.*

BOX 1**FOUNDATIONAL RESOURCES**

This Guidance Note is grounded in, and intended to operationalize, the following foundational UN Women policies, strategies and frameworks. For a full set of tools and resources, see [Annex 1](#).

- [UN Women Strategic Plan 2026–2029: Creating an Equal World for All Women and Girls](#) (UN Women, 2025)
- [UN Women Economic Empowerment Strategy](#) (UN Women, 2024)
- [UN Women Climate and Environment Strategy](#) (UN Women, 2026)
- [Transforming Care Systems in the Context of the Sustainable Development Goals and Our Common Agenda](#) (United Nations, 2024)
- [Addressing Care in Times of Conflict and Crisis: Guidance Note](#) (UN Women, 2025)
- [Advancing Gender-Responsive Synergies Across the Rio Conventions](#) (UN Women, 2024)
- [Feminist Climate Justice: A Framework for Action](#) (UN Women, 2023)
- [The Climate–Care Nexus: Addressing the Linkages Between Climate Change and Women’s and Girls’ Unpaid Care, Domestic and Communal Work](#) (UN Women, 2023)

1.3 STRUCTURE

The Guidance Note is organized as follows:

- **Section 1: Introduction** sets out the purpose, scope and structure.
- **Section 2: Key issues** explains how care systems, climate change and environmental degradation interconnect, why the care–climate nexus matters for gender equality, and why it must be urgently addressed.
- **Section 3: Analytical framework** introduces the framework that underpins the Guidance Note – the three main intersections through which care and climate connect – and applies the 6R framework for transforming care systems to this context. This section is the conceptual core of the Guidance Note.
- **Section 4: Normative landscape and entry points** applies the analytical framework to the policy and normative landscape. It maps the current state of integration across both foundational care frameworks and climate and environmental frameworks, and highlights entry points along the normative process, illustrated by case studies.
- **Section 5: Programmatic landscape and entry points** shows how the analytical framework is applied in practice, drawing on promising UN Women programme cases from several regions. It covers both directions of integration – care into climate programmes, and climate into care programmes – and identifies design conditions, barriers and lessons learned.
- **Section 6: Coordination landscape and entry points** identifies where and how to advance the care–climate nexus through a coordination role, from global UN mechanisms to regional and country-level working groups and task forces. Includes case studies.
- **Section 7: Evidence and research needs** maps what is known about the care–climate nexus, what can be addressed through synthesis of existing evidence, and where further research investment is needed.
- **Annex 1: Tools and resources** compiles key references, frameworks and tools, organized by care, climate and environment, and the care–climate nexus.
- **Annex 2: Key messages** for care audiences on integrating climate and environment considerations, and for climate and environment audiences on integrating care.

2. KEY ISSUES

This section describes how climate change, biodiversity loss and land degradation affect care work across all its dimensions; why addressing the care–climate nexus has never been more urgent; and why an intersectional lens is critical to effective analysis and action.

2.1 THE GLOBAL CARE CRISIS

By 2030, an estimated 2.3 billion people will require care (including 1.9 billion children under 15 and 200 million older persons), yet the system faces a labour deficit of 18 million health workers.¹⁵ Globally, women provide over 76 per cent of all unpaid care work and spend 2.5 times more hours per day than men on care.¹⁶ Care responsibilities prevent over 700 million women from participating in the formal labour market. Their exclusion contributes to their underemployment,

concentration in informal employment, reduced working hours and slower career progression.¹⁷ Meanwhile, rapidly ageing populations and the shift towards nuclear families mean traditional family-based caregiving is no longer viable for many households.¹⁸ These dynamics play out differently across contexts, mediated by factors such as extensive labour migration and ageing populations in rural communities.

2.2 THE TRIPLE PLANETARY CRISIS

The triple planetary crisis, encompassing biodiversity loss, climate change and pollution, is putting human lives and livelihoods at risk. Driven largely by unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, population growth, fossil fuel dependence, land-use change and the overexploitation of natural resources, these crises share common underlying causes and reinforce one another through multiple feedback loops. As the variety of plant, animal and fungi species decreases, this loss of biodiversity is exacerbating the climate crisis, leading, for example, to reductions in forests' rain-regulating roles and oceans' capacity for carbon capture. Additionally,

water, air and land pollution contribute to species loss and accelerate warming (for instance, via greenhouse gases or water sediment from farmland or industry). As a result, ecosystem services are diminishing at increasing rates, putting human rights, health and safety in peril, while the acceleration of climate change and environmental degradation threatens livelihoods and jobs.¹⁹ The scale of the triple planetary crisis and its gendered care implications is significant. Under a worst-case scenario, by 2050 climate change could push up to 158 million more women and girls into poverty.²⁰

2.3 CARE WORK IN THE CONTEXT OF CLIMATE CHANGE, ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION AND JUST TRANSITIONS

Care work and the natural environment are both essential for human survival and well-being. Yet the natural environment and women's and girls' labour are often treated as if their supply is limitless and costless. Today's economic systems have widened racial and gender inequalities, while scaling back state regulations that protect the environment and cutting investments in public goods and services.²¹

The global care crisis is being aggravated and intensified by the triple planetary crisis, with climate change and environmental degradation disrupting care systems and increasing the volume and intensity of care work (unpaid and paid, direct and indirect). These impacts disproportionately affect low-income households, rural communities in the Global South, and especially women and girls who provide care.

For example:

- **As natural resources become scarcer** and ecosystems are degraded, time poverty escalates. When the availability of clean water, food, fuelwood and other essential resources is diminished, the time and effort required to meet basic household and community needs increases. The resulting time poverty – the condition in which people have insufficient time for rest, paid work, education and civic participation – disproportionately affects women and girls.²²
- **Extreme weather events** and climate-related health impacts generate new demands for direct care. Respiratory illnesses associated with air pollution and wildfire smoke, heat-related health conditions, and the physical and psychological toll of displacement all increase the need for personal caregiving. For example, in Bangladesh, women spent an average of one additional hour per day on direct care work during flooding-induced disease outbreaks.²³
- **During climate-related disasters** more broadly, women's daily time spent on unpaid care work has risen from an average of 7 hours to 13 or more in the Philippines, as women care for injured and sick family members, manage disrupted households, substitute for unavailable formal care services and compensate for collapsed public services.²⁴
- **During drought events** specifically, in Kenya, women's time spent collecting water fell by more than two thirds once seasonal rains returned, from an average of 185 minutes (and 9.7 km) per round trip during the 2023 drought to 55 minutes (and 2.7 km) in the wetter conditions of 2024.²⁵
- **Extreme heat** further compounds these dynamics. It increases care needs associated with heat-related illnesses, reduces the productivity of household tasks and places additional demands on caregivers. In India, without action to reduce emissions or adapt to rising temperatures, the time women spend on unpaid care work under extreme heat is projected to rise from an average of 5 hours per day today to 8.3 hours per day by 2050.²⁶
- **Biodiversity loss** reduces access to essential ecosystem resources that communities depend on for health and subsistence, including clean water sources, food and medicinal plants. The global food system is also responsible for the decimation of biodiversity; industrial agriculture favours monocropping that depends heavily on chemicals, pesticides and antibiotics, which have detrimental impacts on human and environmental health.²⁷ Evidence shows that women living near water bodies affected by algal blooms are more likely to experience high levels of anaemia, an indicator of insufficient nutritious food intake.²⁸

- **Climate-related migration** intensifies these dynamics, with men being more likely to migrate for paid work and women who stay behind taking on sole or primary responsibility for household and community care work alongside agricultural and environmental management, frequently without access to social protection or community coping networks.²⁹
- **Gender-based violence rises with environmental and climate stress.** Every 1°C increase in ambient temperature is associated with a 4.7 per cent rise in intimate partner violence. With even sharper spikes in heat, femicide rates rise by as much as 28 per cent.³⁰
- **Traditional medicine remains a primary source of healthcare in many countries.** The majority of countries responding to the World Health Organization's most recent global survey reported that more than 60 per cent of their population use traditional, complementary or integrative medicine. Women are frequently its primary custodians, both as healers and as household caregivers. As biodiversity declines and the plants this knowledge depends on become scarcer, this accessible form of healthcare also erodes.³¹

BOX 2

CARE IN TIMES OF CONFLICT, CRISIS AND CLIMATE SHOCKS

Climate shocks (such as droughts, floods, extreme heat, etc.) and armed conflict often reinforce one another, driving water and food insecurity, displacement and economic instability. These overlapping crises heighten societal vulnerabilities and exacerbate care needs while simultaneously disrupting access to the systems that provide care. Increasing care responsibilities, which women and girls already disproportionately carry because of discriminatory social norms, limit their meaningful participation in peace and security processes, climate adaptation/mitigation and humanitarian action, thereby weakening these efforts.

Effective solutions, especially in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, thus require integrated approaches that combine care, peacebuilding and climate action. The UN Women [Addressing Care in Times of Conflict and Crisis: Guidance Note](#) (2025) recommends embedding care and climate resilience as cross-cutting issues in Women, Peace and Security (WPS) National Action Plans. Across the four pillars of the WPS agenda, this includes: ensuring caregivers' participation in the prevention and mediation of climate-related insecurities and environmental peacebuilding processes; incorporating care into protection mechanisms for women environmental human rights defenders to address physical and psychological needs; integrating knowledge of care systems into conflict prevention, climate security risk assessments and disaster risk reduction plans; and making care central to recovery strategies that address climate-related insecurity.

As climate change impacts and environmental degradation intensify, so does environmental care work shouldered by women, adding to already heavy household care workloads that are borne with limited recognition, compensation or support.³² The result

is that women are often simultaneously the primary managers of ecosystems under stress and the primary absorbers of the care-related consequences when those ecosystems fail. Meanwhile, as food crops become less diverse, droughts and floods

reduce yields and food becomes less nutritious due to degraded soil, women's unpaid work to provide healthy food for themselves and their families has become more labour intensive and time consuming.³³

More than 1.2 billion jobs, or 40 per cent of the global labour force, that are directly or heavily dependent on the environment and ecosystems are at serious risk, with women expected to be severely affected due to their high rate of participation in sectors prone to climate change impacts, such as agriculture.³⁴ As countries pursue a decarbonization agenda towards the Paris Agreement goals to hold global warming to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels, 24 million new jobs could be created worldwide by 2030. However, more than 80 per cent of the

new jobs created, primarily through the phaseout of coal mining and coal-fired power, will be in sectors currently dominated by men.³⁵ A transition away from economies based on the exploitation and extraction of fossil fuels and natural resources is imperative to mitigate climate change and environmental degradation and address the interlinked care crisis.

This dual dynamic – increased care workloads on one side, eroded and restructured livelihoods on the other – makes gender-responsive just transitions a structural necessity. A study conducted by UN Women and Cambridge Econometrics provides compelling evidence at global and regional levels that investments in care, alongside other decarbonization measures, can enhance just transition outcomes.³⁶

BOX 3

THE CARE DIAMOND: UNDERSTANDING HOW CARE IS ORGANIZED AND WHO PROVIDES IT

The care diamond is a framework for understanding how care is organized across four spheres of society: the household, the state, the market, and the community. In many contexts, the household absorbs the largest share. Where public services are underfunded, market-based care is unaffordable, and when community networks are eroded by climate displacement, resource scarcity or conflict, the household care gap widens further.

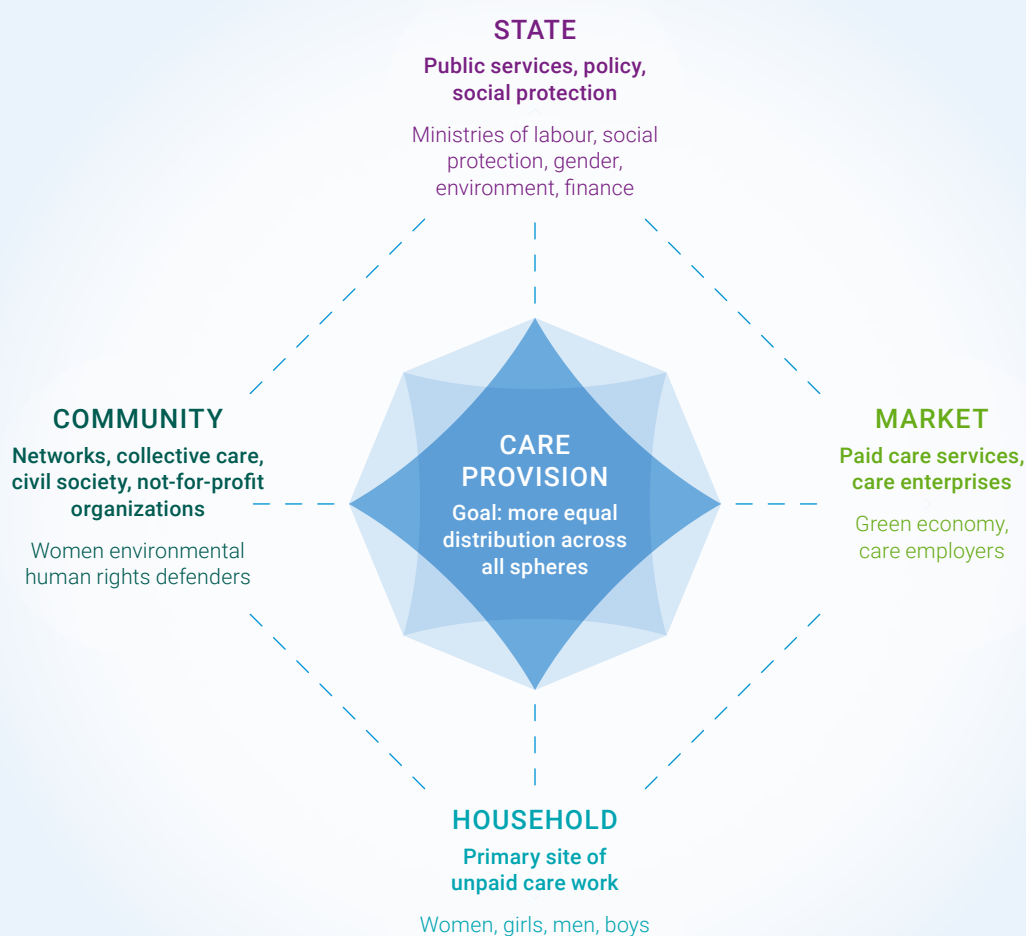
The care diamond is useful for practitioners working at the care–climate nexus for three reasons:

- **First, it makes visible where climate-affected care work happens.** Collecting water and fuel, tending to sick family members and managing degraded land sit mostly in the household and community spheres. This care work is provided largely by women and girls and is the primary mechanism through which communities absorb the consequences of climate shocks.
- **Second, it identifies the four spheres of practitioners.** Each sphere implies different partners and entry points: government ministries (state), employers and care enterprises (market), women's organizations and civil society groups (community), and caregivers themselves (household). A gender-responsive just transition requires engaging all four spheres so that as economies transform, care responsibilities are redistributed rather than further concentrated in the household.

- **Third, it frames the goal of responsiveness.** The goal is not simply to reduce the time women spend on individual care tasks, but to shift how caregiving is valued, organized and distributed across all four spheres. In climate-stressed contexts, this means the care-related consequences of environmental breakdown should be addressed through public investment and policy action, not absorbed by default by women and girls.

The care diamond

How care is organized across society



Source: Adapted from S. Razavi, 2007.³⁷

2.4 THE URGENCY OF ADDRESSING THE CARE-CLIMATE NEXUS

The urgency of addressing the care–climate nexus is underscored by the threat of active erosion of hard-won gender equality gains. Progress achieved over decades – in girls’ education, women’s labour market attachment and re-entry after caregiving responsibilities, access to paid employment, health outcomes, and time for political participation and representation in climate and environmental negotiations – is at risk of reversal as climate impacts intensify and multiply. As climate and environmental stress deepen, the risks of gender-based violence rise, while girls are increasingly pulled from school to collect water over longer distances or to assist with more demanding agricultural and household care workloads. Women’s time for paid work and political participation contracts as unpaid care workloads expand. Communities that have made measurable progress on gender equality indicators face the prospect of losing those gains not through any failure of policy intent, but through the compounding pressures of a changing climate acting on an already unequal care system. The urgency is reinforced by the missed opportunity if not addressed: care systems that could be resourced as a source of resilience are instead being depleted by the very crisis they are absorbing.

Unpaid community-based care also functions as informal infrastructure for climate adaptation, absorbing shocks that formal systems fail to meet. Unpaid

care work is estimated to fill 76 per cent of service gaps in the aftermath of disasters, yet only 4 per cent of global adaptation finance for disaster response targets health services and just 2 per cent supports education.³⁸ Field evidence from the Care and Climate Circuit, coordinated by Instituto Procomum across 22 peripheral and island neighbourhoods of Belém, Brazil, confirms this pattern directly in the urban Amazon: community waste management, medicinal herb networks and territorial protection practices function as an invisible subsidy to urban climate resilience, provided overwhelmingly by Black and marginalized women without recognition or remuneration.³⁹ Recognizing and resourcing this existing ‘informal’ infrastructure, rather than treating care solely as a sector affected by climate change, is itself a resilience-building strategy.

The UNFCCC has recognized that climate policies implemented without women’s meaningful participation can increase existing inequalities and decrease effectiveness.⁴⁰ Programmatic evidence reinforces this: reforestation programmes that rely on women’s unpaid environmental care, and technology interventions that deliver time savings without addressing the social conditions that determine how that time is reallocated, have both been documented as failing to redistribute care, even when they deliver climate outcomes.⁴¹

KEY TAKEAWAY

Failing to integrate a climate and environmental lens into care programming and policy means working against the tide – making investments in care systems that climate change will progressively undermine. The argument runs equally in the other direction for practitioners and policymakers whose primary focus is on climate and environmental action. The communities most vulnerable to climate impacts, and most critical to the success of adaptation and mitigation strategies, are the same communities where care workloads are heaviest and care systems most strained.

2.5 THE PRINCIPLE OF INTERSECTIONALITY

An intersectional lens is essential to understanding who bears the heaviest care and climate consequences, and to ensure that programming and policy responses reach those who are most exposed rather than those who are easiest to reach.

As an analytical concept, intersectionality provides an understanding of the intersection of social, economic and other forms of inequalities, including race, class and power, as complex, interlinked, shifting and multifaceted.⁴² An intersectional approach can pursue commonalities that do not lose sight of specificities of difference, creating opportunities for alliances across feminist, ecological, social and racial justice movements.⁴³

Intersectionality means recognizing that women and girls, in all their diversity, do not experience the care–climate nexus uniformly. Where public care services and infrastructure are inadequate, climate change, biodiversity loss and environmental degradation increase the time required to secure essential resources and generate additional care needs. These impacts are shaped by intersecting inequalities related to income, location, age, disability, ethnicity, and migration status, determining who bears the greatest care responsibilities.

Key intersecting dimensions of vulnerability and agency include the following:

- **Women in low-income households** face the sharpest convergence of climate exposure and care workloads, particularly where public care services and infrastructure are limited and where water, fuel and food collection are women's primary responsibility.
- **Women and girls in rural areas** bear the most direct increase in indirect care workloads, as land degradation, drought and ecosystem decline extend collection distances and degrade natural systems on which household subsistence depends in contexts with limited access to public care services and infrastructure.
- **Indigenous women** occupy a distinct position at this intersection, both as custodians of biodiversity, ancestral ecological knowledge and natural resource management, and as among those most directly exposed to the consequences of ecosystem collapse and land dispossession. Their knowledge and leadership are essential to effective climate and environmental governance.
- **Women with disabilities** face compounded barriers to both care access and climate adaptation, but should be recognized as agents – as caregivers, community organizers and climate actors – not only as recipients of care or as a vulnerable population.
- **Women in urban and peri-urban settings** are a frequently overlooked group in care–climate programming, which tends to focus on rural and Global South contexts. Energy access failures, water infrastructure breakdown and heat stress generate significant care workloads in urban settings, including in middle-income countries, that can be invisible in both care and climate policy frameworks.
- **Migrant women** experience compounded vulnerability due to the intersection of gender, migration status and legal precarity. This limits access to social protection and essential services and increases exposure to socioeconomic and environmental risks, particularly in the context of displacement and migration linked to climate change.

- **Women heading households due to male labour migration** face a distinct convergence of increased environmental care responsibility and reduced adaptive capacity. They take on farm management, water access and climate adaptation decisions with limited training, inputs or control over remittance income, often while lacking the specific knowledge needed to adjust production to a changing climate. This dynamic is acute in Tajikistan, where roughly 10 per cent of the population works abroad and remittances are rarely directed towards climate adaptation measures; women are left managing increasingly climate-stressed farms in drought-prone, water-scarce regions, with little institutional support.⁴⁴
- **Vulnerability and impact also vary across the life course.** Girls face heightened risks; and pregnant and breastfeeding women face additional physiological vulnerability to heat, with research showing that a 1°C rise in temperature increases the risk of stillbirth and premature birth by approximately 5 per cent, with risks to premature delivery found to be highest when heat exposure occurs in the week before birth. Older women face the biggest risk of heat-related mortality of any group, driven by declining thermoregulation, poverty and a higher likelihood of living alone; some evidence suggests that older women are more likely than older men to persist in doing household tasks during heatwaves.⁴⁵

KEY TAKEAWAY

Applying an intersectional lens means resisting the tendency to speak of ‘women’ as a homogenous group, and ensuring that the entry points, tools and resources presented in this Guidance Note are calibrated to reach those whose care and climate exposure is greatest, not simply those who are easiest to reach.

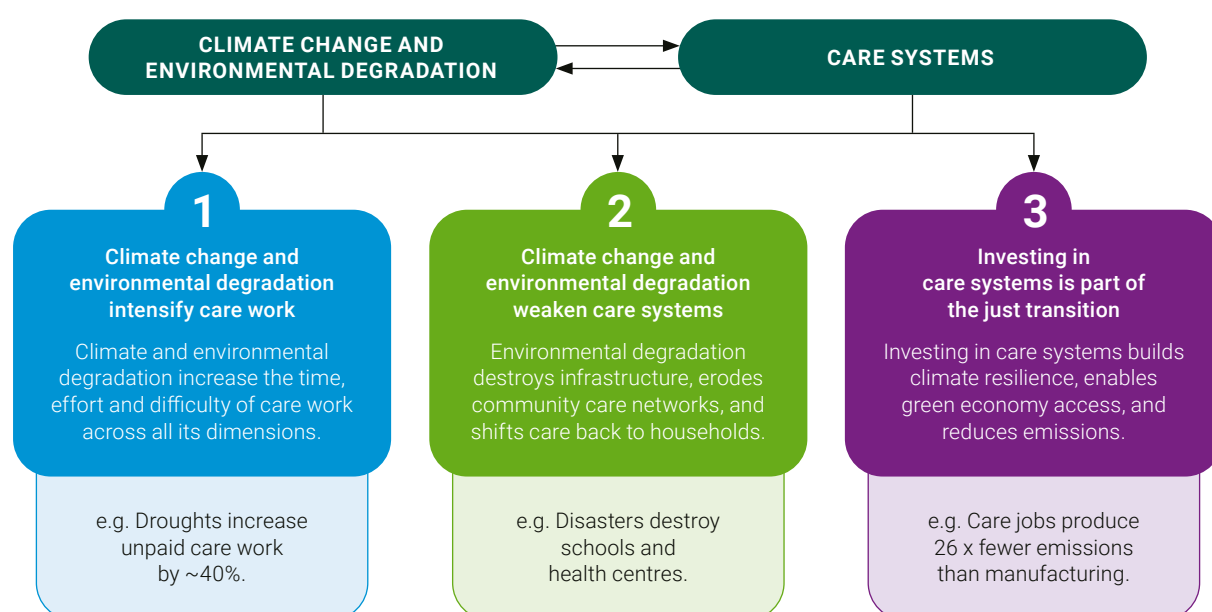
3. THE CARE–CLIMATE ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

UN Women’s care–climate analytical framework helps practitioners understand how care systems and climate change, environmental degradation and just transitions connect across three main intersections (Figure 1). Drawing on the work of others, including the Climate and Care Initiative⁴⁶ and feminist and ecological economists, UN Women has adapted and extended the framework for use across its triple mandate combining normative support, UN system coordination and operational activities to advance gender equality and empower women and girls globally. The framework is applied to the full scope of the three Rio Conventions, integrated with the 6R framework for transforming care systems, and grounded in UN Women’s Strategic Plan.

The three intersections of the analytical framework are not mutually exclusive: in many contexts all three are operating simultaneously, but naming them separately makes it possible to ask more precise questions about what is needed and where.

3.1 UN WOMEN’S ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK FOR ADDRESSING THE LINKS BETWEEN CARE SYSTEMS AND CLIMATE CHANGE, ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION AND JUST TRANSITIONS

FIGURE 1
UN Women’s analytical framework



INTERSECTION 1:

CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION INTENSIFY CARE WORK

The first intersection captures the most direct and visible dimension of the care–climate relationship: the ways in which climate change, biodiversity loss and land degradation increase the volume, intensity and difficulty of care work. Climate change increases care workloads through resource scarcity and climate-related health impacts. Biodiversity loss

reduces the natural resources that communities depend on for livelihoods, health, subsistence and indirect care provisioning. Land degradation diminishes the health of the soil and nutrition of food, and extends the distances women travel for water, fuel and food, compounding indirect care workloads in dryland and semi-arid contexts on a chronic, daily basis.

- The **health dimension** of this intersection is well-documented. Climate disasters and environmental degradation generate new and intensified demand for direct care work, both unpaid and paid, for people experiencing pollution-related respiratory illness, heat stress-related conditions, particularly in children, pregnant and older persons,⁴⁷ vector-borne diseases, which are expanding into new geographic ranges, and the physical and psychological consequences of displacement and loss.
- Wildfire smoke, an increasing consequence of climate change, is currently associated with an estimated 339,000 **premature deaths** globally each year, with research projecting that this toll will rise sharply as climate change intensifies wildfire activity and smoke exposure.⁴⁸
- Biodiversity loss compounds these risks, with up to 80 per cent of the population in many low- and middle-income countries relying on **traditional medicine** derived from plant and ecosystem resources that biodiversity loss and land degradation are progressively depleting.⁴⁹
- When those **resources disappear**, the community-level health and care capacity they sustained, predominantly managed by women, disappears with them, increasing both the need for formal care services and the cost and distance to access them.

EXAMPLES OF INTERSECTION 1:

- Evidence suggests that under a high-emissions scenario, daily water collection times for women without household access could increase by 30 per cent globally and up to 100 per cent regionally by 2050.⁵⁰
- In Ethiopia's drought-affected regions of Somali, Oromia, and Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region, child marriage increased by an average of 119 per cent between January–April 2021 and the same period in 2022, as a negative coping mechanism by families in response to climate-driven livelihood stress.⁵¹

INTERSECTION 2:

CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION WEAKEN CARE SYSTEMS

Climate change and environmental degradation undermine care systems – the infrastructure, services, social networks and natural systems through which care is organized and delivered – shifting care responsibilities that were previously met through public services and community networks back onto households, and most often onto women and girls.

This weakening of care systems takes two forms. The first is gradual degradation: resource scarcity progressively reduces the quality and accessibility of care services, strains health and education systems, and erodes the community networks that

redistribute care across households. This affects not only who provides care work and how much, but also the quality of care that people actually receive; children in under-resourced schools, patients in understaffed health facilities, and older persons dependent on overstretched community networks all experience declining care quality as a direct consequence of climate and environmental stress on care systems.⁵² The second is acute destruction: extreme weather events and climate-induced disasters destroy schools, hospitals, health centres and water infrastructure, pushing care work back onto unpaid household labour.

- **Physical infrastructure** is often care-relevant infrastructure. Public transport and paved roads enable parents to take children to medical appointments. Water towers and reliable electricity reduce the time households spend on water collection and other domestic tasks. Hospitals and schools deliver essential public care services. Tension arises when reconstruction reproduces pre-existing inequalities, prioritizes economic production over social reproduction, or fails to restore the gendered care infrastructure that communities depended on. The core problem is that unpaid, community-based and women-led care remains systematically invisible in damage assessments and recovery financing, and as such is consistently left out of reconstruction plans.⁵³
- **Climate-induced migration** is another pathway through which climate change weakens care systems. Migration driven by climate and environmental stress reshapes who is available to provide care and under what conditions, in origin communities, in transit, and in destination communities. When men migrate in search of income or safety, women who remain frequently take on sole or primary responsibility for household and community care work alongside agricultural and environmental management. Women also migrate in large numbers in response to climate stress, and migrant women face distinct care vulnerabilities, including reduced access to reproductive care services and increased risk of exploitation in domestic and care work.⁵⁴
- The **biodiversity and land degradation dimensions** of this intersection are also distinct. Ecosystem collapse reduces the natural systems communities use to maintain health and well-being, such as traditional medicine, agrobiodiversity and watershed function, effectively dismantling community-level care capacity. When biodiversity loss and land degradation deplete resources, communities lose care capacity that infrastructure investment alone cannot replace: once ancestral knowledge systems are lost or once the ecosystems they depend on are degraded beyond recovery, the care capacity they sustained cannot simply be rebuilt.⁵⁵

- The erosion of care systems documented throughout this intersection can also be understood through the UNFCCC’s own framework for **non-economic loss and damage (NELD)**, which recognizes health, psychosocial well-being, culture and social cohesion as legitimate categories of climate loss.⁵⁶ Centering Care in Climate Finance argues that care should be treated as both a metric of loss and a mode of repair within the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage.⁵⁷ The Climate Justice Resilience Fund’s NELD grantmaking programme, spanning grants across the Bay of Bengal, East Africa and the Pacific, offers a model for how this recognition could be extended to care.⁵⁸

EXAMPLES OF INTERSECTION 2:

- Research supported by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in the Reconquista River Basin, Argentina, documents how women displaced by climate stress extended their unpaid care and environmental care roles into the new communities and informal settlements in which they found themselves, managing household care under significantly more constrained conditions while also taking on environmental care responsibilities in unfamiliar settings. The research illustrates that climate migration does not reduce women’s care workloads; it displaces and compounds them, in contexts where care services and support networks are often even more limited than in origin communities.⁵⁹
- Environmental degradation also takes the form of acute destruction. Cyclone Freddy’s impact on Malawi and Mozambique in 2023 illustrates this at scale; the storm damaged or destroyed over 1,000 schools and more than 180 health facilities across both countries and left over a million people without access to water and sanitation infrastructure, forcing displaced households to fill the gaps in care, primarily through the unpaid labour of women and girls.⁶⁰

INTERSECTION 3: INVESTING IN CARE SYSTEMS IS PART OF THE JUST TRANSITION

The third intersection highlights that care systems are not only affected by climate change and environmental degradation – they are part of the solution. Investing in care systems, including climate-resilient care-enabling physical infrastructure and care services, builds the community resilience that

effective climate adaptation requires, enables women to access the diverse economic opportunities a just transition should generate, and contributes directly to emissions reduction and biodiversity conservation goals.

- Investment in care services is relatively **low-carbon**. Across Europe and North America, investing in care services would generate approximately 50 per cent fewer direct and indirect CO₂-equivalent emissions than the same investment in construction, and 23 times fewer emissions than investing in utilities.⁶¹ At the same time, investing in care creates approximately 1.5 times as many jobs as investing the same amount in construction, and twice as many jobs as investing in utilities.
- Because women are overrepresented among the care workforce, estimates from North America and Europe show that **investments in care services sectors** could generate approximately four times as many jobs for women as for men, a near inverse of the pattern in energy and construction.⁶² Globally, investments in the care economy could create nearly 300 million jobs by 2035,⁶³ representing a powerful lever for closing gender employment gaps while expanding economic and environmental gains in the context of just transitions.
- Investing in care infrastructure, childcare, health services, clean energy for households, and water and sanitation, directly enables women's participation in paid work, including in green economy sectors. **Strong care systems are themselves a climate adaptation strategy:** communities with well-resourced care infrastructure are better able to withstand, respond to and recover from climate shocks, while communities where care infrastructure is weak face cascading failures as households absorb demands that overwhelmed public systems can no longer meet.⁶⁴

KEY TAKEAWAY

The resilience Intersection 3 describes is systemic capacity built through investment and redistribution across all four spheres of the care diamond, not adaptive work-bearing by women and girls in the absence of public support. Any programming or policy response grounded in this intersection must be designed with appreciation of this distinction to avoid perpetuating a false assumption of women as environment saviours.⁶⁵

EXAMPLES OF INTERSECTION 3:

- Nazava Water Filters in Indonesia, documented through the Kore Global/IDRC ‘Transforming the Care Economy Through Impact Investing’ research, saved women up to 139 hours per year previously spent on collecting and boiling water, while reducing 177,000 tonnes of CO₂ emissions in 2021, and created an additional income stream for women through informal retail distribution. The case illustrates how a single care-oriented investment can simultaneously reduce women’s indirect care workloads, generate income and deliver measurable climate outcomes.⁶⁶
- A complementary example illustrates investment in the physical infrastructure of formal care systems. The ‘GREEN: Cool & Care project’ in Austria retrofitted nursing homes with green infrastructure, including living walls and open green spaces, reducing heat exposure for both residents and care staff. The case demonstrates that climate-resilient care infrastructure investment protects care recipients and the care workforce simultaneously, reinforcing that strong care systems function as climate adaptation infrastructure in their own right.⁶⁷

BOX 4

WHEN CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT INTERVENTIONS MAKE CARE INEQUALITIES WORSE

Climate and environmental interventions that are poorly designed can increase rather than reduce gender and care inequalities – a risk across actions to address climate change, biodiversity and land degradation. For example, biofuel projects have diverted land from food production, increasing food insecurity and the indirect care workload of women responsible for household nutrition.⁶⁸ Emissions trading schemes and carbon markets have generated conflicts over land and resource access in Indigenous territories, documented in Amazonian and Andean regions, and have in some contexts accelerated dispossession of the lands on which women’s environmental care work depends.⁶⁹ Biodiversity conservation programmes under the CBD have restricted community access to the natural resources women depend on for care, such as medicinal plants, wild foods and water sources, without compensation or alternative provision. These failures reflect a systematic pattern in which environmental interventions extract value from women’s labour and from community ecosystems without accounting for the care consequences.

KEY TAKEAWAY

In any intervention touching on land, natural resources or environmental labour, practitioners should ask who is providing unpaid care and environmental care in this context, and what the intervention does to the conditions under which that care is provided.

3.2 THE 6R FRAMEWORK FOR TRANSFORMING CARE SYSTEMS APPLIED TO THE CARE-CLIMATE NEXUS

The three intersections described in the analytical framework explain how care and climate connect. The 6R framework – Recognize, Reduce, Redistribute, Reward, Represent and Resource – explains what a transformative response looks like.⁷⁰ The framework serves two purposes. First, the 6Rs provide

care practitioners with a structured way to identify where climate change is affecting their work. Second, they give climate and just transition practitioners a vocabulary for describing what care-responsive climate action entails.

TABLE 1
Using the 6R framework to connect care and climate action

Policy objective and entry points	Examples of climate and environment action
 <p>RECOGNIZE care work, unpaid and paid, as valuable, skilled and essential; and recognize the rights and contributions of those providing and receiving care across their life course. Recognize through: international laws, normative and policy frameworks; local, national and regional plans and strategies; and care-related data.</p> <p>Recognize care work as a dimension of climate vulnerability and climate action. Assess care requirements and responsibilities of populations in climate-vulnerable contexts to inform adaptation responses; recognize environmental care work, land and water management, biodiversity stewardship and traditional ecological knowledge as labour that deserves compensation.</p>	<p>Example: Of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) analysed by the UN Women Gender Equality and Climate Policy Scorecard, only a small minority include specific actions or commitments on unpaid care work. The gap between climate impact and normative recognition is the most immediate advocacy target for practitioners working on NDC revision cycles.</p>
 <p>REDUCE the time and energy required for indirect care work, such as cooking, water and fuel collection, and domestic maintenance, by increasing access to time- and energy-saving technologies and infrastructure.</p> <p>Reduce the indirect care workloads intensified by climate stress through low-carbon technologies and infrastructure that simultaneously deliver care and climate co-benefits. Reduce and mitigate risks of the destruction of basic infrastructure critical for indirect care work, including water and sanitation, clean energy and transport systems, in climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction planning. Ensure that technology interventions are designed so that saved time is genuinely redistributed to education, rest and income generation, rather than absorbed by other unpaid tasks.</p>	<p>Example: Nazava Water Filters in Indonesia saved women up to 139 hours per year previously spent on water collection and boiling, while reducing 177,000 tonnes of CO₂ in 2021, a documented case of care workload reduction and emissions reduction achieved through a single low-carbon intervention.⁷¹</p>
 <p>REDISTRIBUTE the time, cost and responsibility for unpaid care work among the state, private sector, communities, families and households, and between genders. Including through: care services, social protection, care-supportive workplaces and efforts to shift discriminatory social norms and challenge gender and other stereotypes.</p> <p>Redistribute the time, cost and responsibilities for increased unpaid care work generated by climate change and environmental degradation through inclusive and accessible care services and social protection. Ensure that climate adaptation plans and disaster recovery frameworks explicitly address care redistribution by restoring public care services alongside physical infrastructure, and that land restoration and reforestation programmes do not treat women's unpaid environmental care labour as a free input. Consider opportunities to support longer-term shifts in gender roles and social norms around caregiving as part of just transition planning.</p>	<p>Example: The CEMALI programme in Mali integrated care workload reduction explicitly with reforestation and forest management, treating care redistribution and environmental restoration as a single programmatic objective rather than separate work-streams, a replicable model for redistribution in a climate and biodiversity context.⁷²</p>

Policy objective and entry points	Examples of climate and environment action
 <p>REWARD paid care workers by formalizing care and domestic work, and ensuring decent work and equal opportunities and conditions for migrant care workers.</p> <p>Reward paid care workers by recognizing care jobs as part of the green economy and ensuring their inclusion in just transition frameworks. Ensure that women providing environmental care work, land restoration, biodiversity stewardship, and Indigenous, ancestral, local and ecological knowledge management, are compensated through climate finance instruments rather than having their labour treated as a free contribution to climate goals. Include care worker wages, conditions and social protection in the gender dimensions of NDCs and National Adaptation Plans.</p>	<p>Example: WOCAN's W+ Standard provides one model for the compensation mechanism this R calls for: it measures and monetizes verified improvements in women's lives, including income, time and well-being, converting them into tradable credits that channel climate finance revenue directly to women. The W+ Standard demonstrates that climate finance instruments can be structured to compensate women's contributions directly rather than assuming their time and labour are freely available, a principle directly relevant to formalizing and rewarding care work within climate and environmental programming.⁷³</p>
 <p>REPRESENT caregivers, paid and unpaid, and care recipients in decision-making, climate negotiations and social dialogue. Including through: freedom of association, the right to organize, social dialogue and collective bargaining, and participation in decision-making.</p> <p>Support women's organizations and civil society groups with caregiving constituencies to participate meaningfully in UNFCCC, CBD, UNCCD, and national and local-level processes as rights-holders with technical expertise, not only as stakeholders.</p>	<p>Example: In Senegal, UN Women's 3R Programme demonstrates representation in practice. Through a participatory process engaging women farmer cooperatives, elected officials, and community leaders, 13 municipalities integrated women's unpaid care needs directly into their Local Development Plans, ensuring that caregivers themselves shaped the resulting priorities rather than being consulted after the fact.⁷⁴</p>
 <p>RESOURCE care systems over the long term through sustainable investments and physical infrastructure. Including through: costing and tracking care investments, care- and gender-responsive budgeting, and expanding fiscal space.</p> <p>Resource care-related interventions, policies, services and infrastructure as part of climate adaptation and just transition responses. Advocate for climate and environment finance frameworks, including the Green Climate Fund and multilateral development banks, to recognize care infrastructure and care workload reduction as eligible and measurable climate adaptation outcomes. Currently, as noted above, it is estimated that only 4 per cent of global adaptation finance targets health services and just 2 per cent supports education, despite unpaid care work filling an estimated 76 per cent of service gaps in the aftermath of disasters.⁷⁵</p> <p>Ensure that loss and damage mechanisms account for the care-related costs of climate change, including the increased unpaid care workloads imposed by climate disasters and slow-onset environmental degradation.</p> <p>Resource women's movements and civil society organizations to enable the meaningful representation described under the fifth R.</p>	<p>Example: In Bangladesh, research by Oxfam documents that unpaid care hours increase significantly for low-income women in areas of high climate vulnerability, and argues that care-related impacts, including the time costs imposed by climate disasters, must be acknowledged and compensated through reparative justice within loss and damage frameworks.⁷⁶ Reparations and loss and damage funds that fail to account for care work systematically undercount the losses women experience.</p>

4. NORMATIVE LANDSCAPE AND ENTRY POINTS

This section maps the current state of integration across both foundational care frameworks and climate and environmental frameworks, and highlights entry points along the normative process. Closing the gaps within care frameworks and climate frameworks requires different strategies, evidence and language, depending on which framework a practitioner is working in.

4.1 CARE NORMATIVE FRAMEWORKS

A growing body of intergovernmental commitments has established care work as a priority for gender equality and sustainable development. The frameworks below represent the normative foundation

that practitioners can draw on when making the case for care in climate and environmental processes, and the architecture within which climate dimensions need to be operationalized.

At the global level, six intergovernmental instruments have advanced the care agenda in recent years:

- **UN General Assembly Resolution 77/317 (2023)** established an annual International Day of Care and Support on 29 October, providing a recurring global moment for advocacy and visibility around care work and those who provide it.⁷⁷
- **UN Human Rights Council Resolution 54/6 (2023)** on the Centrality of Care and Support from a Human Rights Perspective established care as a human rights issue, grounding the care agenda in international human rights law and providing a normative hook for those working across the human rights system.⁷⁸
- **UN ECOSOC Resolution 2024/4** on Promoting Care and Support Systems for Social Development recognized care systems as a pillar of social development, linking care investment to sustainable development outcomes and creating a basis for integrating care into development finance and planning processes.⁷⁹
- **ILO Resolution V (2024)** of the International Labour Conference Concerning Care Work and the Care Economy provided the most comprehensive intergovernmental treatment of care as a labour and economic issue, establishing standards and recommendations on decent work for care workers and the governance of care systems.⁸⁰
- **World Health Assembly Resolution 78.16 (2025)** on Accelerating Action on the Global Health and Care Workforce by 2030 situated health and care workers within the global development agenda, providing normative grounding for linking care workforce conditions to health system resilience, including in climate-stressed contexts.⁸¹
- **UN General Assembly Resolution A/C.2/80/L.30/Rev.1 (2025)** on the Contribution of the Care Economy to Sustainable Development placed care economies explicitly within the sustainable development framework, providing normative language for those seeking to make the case for care investment as a development finance priority.⁸²

At the **regional level**, several commitments provide important normative architecture in specific geographic contexts. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the Buenos Aires Commitment⁸³ and the Tlatelolco Commitment⁸⁴ have established regional care frameworks that are among the most advanced in the world, with explicit attention to gender equality and social protection. The ASEAN Comprehensive Framework on the Care Economy⁸⁵ provides a normative basis for care economy advocacy across Southeast Asia. The European

Care Strategy for Caregivers and Care Receivers⁸⁶ establishes care as a cross-cutting policy priority in the European Union. In June 2025, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights adopted Advisory Opinion OC-31/25,⁸⁷ which recognized care as an autonomous human right and a basic human need required by all, and that guaranteeing this right involves ensuring both the autonomy and independence of those receiving care and the rights of those who provide it.

The care normative landscape does, to a limited degree, integrate a climate perspective. For example:

- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the foundational and legally binding international treaty on women's rights, addresses care work through General Recommendations 34 and 37, establishing state obligations on rural women and gender equality in disaster risk reduction respectively, both of which have direct relevance to the care–climate nexus.⁸⁸
- The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) 66 in 2022, in its Agreed Conclusions on achieving gender equality in the context of climate change, environmental degradation and disaster risk reduction, was the first time the CSW placed an explicit focus on the links between gender, care work and climate – a significant normative step.⁸⁹ The CSW72 priority theme on care economies, to be addressed in 2028, is a further opportunity to advance integration.

KEY TAKEAWAY

The intervention required in care frameworks is to continue building and strengthening language to integrate these issues. The links can be made more clear and explicit within care normative frameworks, using the existing language as a foundation to build on and taking advantage of new data and evidence on the links as they emerge. Beyond strengthening language, care programmes can also use the current normative language as a base to operationalize integration, ensuring that climate dimensions are systematically integrated into how care policy is designed and implemented.

4.2 CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT NORMATIVE FRAMEWORKS

Across all three Rio Conventions, care work has been largely absent until recently, with the adoption of the Belém Gender Action Plan (GAP, 2026–2034) at COP30 in Belém. Each convention has developed a gender architecture, including gender action plans and gender-related targets, and each recognizes the importance of women's participation and

leadership in environmental governance. However, the implementation of the Rio Conventions and their gender provisions remains largely siloed, reducing opportunities and generating inefficiencies.⁹⁰ Introducing care as a specific category requires renewed attention to the links and collaboration across all three processes.

TABLE 2

Climate and environment normative frameworks

Framework	Decisions and opportunities for integration	Potential action
<p>United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC):</p> <p>The UNFCCC has a long-standing gender architecture, anchored in the Lima Work Programme on Gender, established at COP20 in Lima in 2014 to advance gender balance and integrate gender considerations into the work of Parties and the secretariat.⁹¹ This was followed by the adoption of the Gender Action Plan (GAP) in 2017 and later extended as the Enhanced Lima Work Programme on Gender and its GAP at COP25 in Madrid in 2019.⁹² The GAP was subsequently extended for 10 years at COP29 in Baku in 2024⁹³ and complemented with the most recent adoption of the Belém GAP at COP30 in 2025.</p>	<p>The Belém Gender Action Plan (GAP, 2025–2034), adopted at COP30 in Belém in November 2025, now provides the primary framework for gender-responsive climate action over the next decade.⁹⁴ For more information on the Action Plan, see Box 5 below.</p> <p>At COP30, Parties also agreed to develop a Just Transition Mechanism, through the United Arab Emirates just transition work programme.⁹⁵ The Decision contains the strongest language to date on human rights, labour rights, Indigenous Peoples' rights, gender equality, decent work, social dialogue and social protection, and the new Belém Action Mechanism for Just Transition (BAM) includes unprecedented references to labour, human and environmental rights.⁹⁶</p> <p>However, care work has remained largely absent from national climate frameworks. Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) are the primary instrument through which Parties operationalize their commitments under the UNFCCC at the country level, setting out each country's climate targets, adaptation priorities and implementation plans. They are therefore the most direct normative expression of how countries translate the UNFCCC's gender architecture into domestic policy and action. Analysis by the UN Women Gender Equality and Climate Policy Scorecard finds that 24 of the 67 NDCs analysed (36 per cent) recognize unpaid care work as an issue of relevance to climate action, and 33 have put forward 87 commitments that will likely reduce unpaid care work.⁹⁷ The Scorecard effectively establishes a baseline for the recognition dimension of the 6R framework in the context of climate change, and represents a valuable tool for monitoring progress going forward.</p>	<p>Countries can integrate unpaid care work indicators into NDCs, National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), and National Adaptation Plan monitoring frameworks, alongside gender-responsive climate budgeting, to further care work integration.</p> <p>There is also a limited near-term window of opportunity to support Member States' submissions on the findings of national assessments of relevant issues, including care work in the context of gender and climate change, by March 2027, as noted in the Belém GAP.</p>
<p>United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD):</p> <p>The CBD recognizes the vital role of women, Indigenous Peoples and local communities in biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, and calls for their full and effective participation in its implementation.</p>	<p>The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), adopted at CBD COP15 in December 2022, includes a stand-alone Target 23 on gender equality, requiring gender-responsive implementation of the Framework and recognizing women's equal rights and access to land and natural resources.⁹⁸</p> <p>A Gender Plan of Action (2023–2030) (GPA) was adopted alongside the GBF at COP15 to guide, promote and support gender-responsive implementation, with three expected outcomes covering equal opportunity and capacity, gender-responsive biodiversity policy and planning, and enabling conditions for gender-responsive implementation.⁹⁹</p> <p>Care has not yet been named as a category in the CBD gender architecture. The entry point for care advocates is through recognized links between biodiversity, women's roles in conservation, and environmental care: traditional ecological knowledge as care knowledge; ecosystem services, clean water, wild foods and medicinal plants as natural care infrastructure on which communities depend; and the well-being dimensions of biodiversity as the foundation of community health and care capacity.</p>	<p>Upcoming CBD COP processes and National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) revision cycles provide opportunities to introduce care language through these entry points, and through building on the language agreed upon within the GPA.</p>

Framework	Decisions and opportunities for integration	Potential action
<p>United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD):</p> <p>The UNCCD recognizes the importance of women in the implementation of the Convention and identifies critical areas for their engagement, including awareness-raising, participation in the design and implementation of programmes, and decision-making at the local level.¹⁰⁰</p>	<p>A Gender Action Plan to accompany implementation of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework was adopted in September 2017, making the UNCCD a more strategic instrument for transforming the livelihoods of women and communities in dryland and semi-arid contexts.¹⁰¹ The UNCCD has a very direct structural connection to the care workload pathway: land degradation drives longer water and fuel collection distances, directly and chronically increasing women's indirect care workloads. Care has not yet been explicitly integrated into the UNCCD Gender Action Plan or national land degradation neutrality frameworks.</p>	<p>Upcoming UNCCD COP processes and land degradation neutrality implementation provide the primary normative entry points for introducing care as a category, e.g. by advocating for unpaid care work to be reflected in the gender-specific indicators that UNCCD Parties have committed to developing for the next Strategic Framework, and within the secretariat's ongoing collaboration with UN Women and the other Rio Conventions on gender equality implementation.¹⁰²</p>
<p>Sendai Framework:</p> <p>Beyond the three Rio Conventions, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015–2030) provides a complementary normative entry point for the care–climate nexus.</p>	<p>A Gender Action Plan to support the Sendai Framework was launched in March 2024 at CSW68, providing a six-year roadmap for closing the gender gap in disaster risk reduction.¹⁰³</p> <p>UN Women's 2024 working paper on advancing gender-responsive synergies across the Rio Conventions explicitly identifies the Sendai GAP as a framework to leverage in building women's resilience to disasters, alongside the Rio Convention gender action plans.¹⁰⁴ The Sendai Framework's four priority areas – understanding disaster risk, strengthening governance, investing in resilience and enhancing preparedness – provide ready-made entry points for introducing care redistribution as a dimension of effective disaster risk reduction.</p>	<p>For those engaging with National Disaster Management Authorities and disaster risk reduction focal points, the Sendai GAP is an accessible normative hook for care arguments, given its explicit focus on disaster contexts, where care workload intensification is most acute and most visible.</p>
<p>Climate finance architecture:</p> <p>Climate and environmental finance frameworks are normative instruments. They set the rules, criteria and standards that determine what counts as eligible climate action and what gender-responsive implementation means in practice. As such, they represent a distinct and under-addressed normative entry point for the care–climate nexus.</p>	<p>The Green Climate Fund (GCF), the primary dedicated multilateral climate finance instrument, has a Gender Policy that requires gender-responsive project design. However, care work is not named as a category of gender analysis in GCF project screening criteria, meaning programmes that deliver care–climate co-benefits cannot access GCF financing for the care dimension of their work.¹⁰⁵</p> <p>By contrast, the Adaptation Fund's updated 2021 Gender Policy goes further, explicitly encouraging projects to address care work, unpaid labour and social protection dimensions where these influence climate vulnerability, illustrating that reform within existing climate finance architecture is both possible and already underway in some instruments.¹⁰⁶ It requires implementing entities to conduct project-specific gender assessments with gender-responsive measures, indicators and disaggregated data at the drafting stage, an existing procedural requirement that care–climate advocacy can build on directly rather than needing to establish from scratch.¹⁰⁷</p> <p>NDC financing plans, the investment strategies that countries develop to implement their NDC commitments, are a significant normative entry point. Care infrastructure is not currently recognized as an eligible climate adaptation expenditure in most NDC financing frameworks, despite its direct role in building community climate resilience.</p>	<p>These are normative gaps requiring normative interventions, such as changes to eligibility criteria, gender policy standards and financing guidelines, that UN Women and partners are positioned to advocate for through engagement across climate finance governance bodies and processes.</p> <p>By centring care, climate finance can move towards financing models that focus on regenerative, community-led systems that sustain well-being, equity and collective resilience, transforming how we define, govern and invest in climate action.</p>

As outlined in the table above, the entry points, normative hooks and advocacy opportunities differ by convention, and practitioners should calibrate their approach accordingly.

While the Belém GAP represents a significant step forward for care within the UNFCCC, the overall picture across all three Rio Conventions is one of absence: care work has not been systematically introduced as a normative category in any of the conventions' core frameworks, gender action plans or national implementation processes. The implementation of the Rio Conventions and their

gender provisions remains largely siloed, and care sits outside even those siloed gender architectures in most cases. The advocacy task is therefore foundational: introducing care concepts, demonstrating their relevance to environmental effectiveness and adaptation outcomes, and building the evidence base for normative integration across all three conventions and the Sendai Framework.

BOX 5

THE BELÉM PACKAGE: WHAT IT MEANS FOR THE CARE–CLIMATE NEXUS

The Belém Package is the set of decisions adopted by Parties at COP30 in Belém, Brazil, in November 2025. Two elements are particularly significant for the care–climate nexus.

The Belém Action Mechanism (BAM) for Just Transition gives just transitions a formal institutional home within the UNFCCC for the first time. Agreed by all 195 Parties as part of the Belém Package, it is mandated to coordinate existing initiatives, share knowledge and best practices, and provide direct support to countries in designing and implementing just transitions. Its adoption reflects years of advocacy by trade unions, women's organizations, Indigenous Peoples and climate justice movements, and creates a formal channel through which care dimensions of just transitions can be advanced within the UNFCCC architecture.¹⁰⁸

The Belém Gender Action Plan (GAP, 2026–2034) is the UNFCCC's third-generation gender action plan, outlining 27 activities and 98 deliverables to promote gender-responsive climate finance, technology development, capacity-building and inclusive leadership across UNFCCC processes. The GAP introduces important elements on care work, health, violence against women and girls, protection mechanisms for women environmental defenders, decent work, quality jobs and socially just transitions, and includes recognition of the intersectional factors shaping the realities of women with disabilities, Indigenous women, rural and remote women, and women of African descent.¹⁰⁹

The GAP's explicit reference to care now provides a concrete normative foundation for advocacy with NDC technical teams, ministries of environment and UNFCCC negotiators. The Belém GAP calls for submissions from Member States and organizations on the findings of national assessments of relevant issues, including care work in the context of gender and climate change, by March 2027. It also tasks the UNFCCC secretariat with preparing a synthesis report in 2029 to inform the review of implementation of the Belém GAP. Additionally, national reporting by Member States on the implementation of gender-responsive climate policies, strategies and actions, including through voluntary reporting under the GAP, will be compiled by the UNFCCC secretariat, with synthesis reports published at COP32 (2027), COP35 (2030) and COP38 (2033), strengthening transparency and creating political accountability for integrating care-related climate commitments.

4.3 ENTRY POINTS ALONG THE NORMATIVE PROCESS

The process through which normative frameworks are drafted, negotiated, reviewed, implemented and financed determines whether commitments translate into action. Each stage of the normative process represents a distinct entry point for advancing care–

climate integration. The entry points outlined below apply across both care and climate/environment normative frameworks, though the specific tactics, actors and leverage points differ, as set out in Sections 4.1 and 4.2 above.

TABLE 3
Normative entry points

Process moment	What it involves	Care frameworks	Climate and environment frameworks
 Drafting	Development of new or revised normative text, including national care policies, Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (NBSAPs), gender action plans, regional care frameworks, and biodiversity and land degradation strategies	Introduce climate language and care workload data into draft care policy text from the outset; propose climate-disaggregated indicators alongside standard care metrics; advocate for climate change to be named as a driver of care workload intensification in national care roadmaps and regional frameworks.	Introduce care language into draft NDC, national assessment, NAP, NBSAP and UNCCD National Action Programme text, and into the gender action plans of all three Rio Conventions. Use the Belém GAP's care language as a model for the CBD Gender Plan of Action and UNCCD Gender Action Plan alike. Propose unpaid care work as an explicit category of vulnerability in NDC adaptation chapters, CBD national target-setting processes under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and UNCCD National Action Programmes.
 Negotiation	Intergovernmental deliberation on normative frameworks, including COP processes under all three Rio Conventions, CSW sessions, and regional intergovernmental conferences	Engage climate-affected women's organizations and care worker constituencies in CSW negotiations; use the reversal framing, that climate is eroding care gains, to build urgency for climate integration in care frameworks; advocate for the inclusion of climate dimensions in regional care commitments, such as future iterations of the Tlatelolco Commitment.	Engage women's organizations, Indigenous women's groups and women environmental human rights defenders as observers and advocates in Rio Convention COP processes. Use existing normative framings in the Belém GAP, CEDAW General Recommendations 34 and 37, and the ILO Resolution on Care Work, as leverage to introduce care as a category in climate, biodiversity and land degradation negotiations. Support cross-convention coordination to build care–climate synergies across UNFCCC, CBD and UNCCD processes.
 Review and reporting	State party reporting cycles, NDC transparency frameworks, gender action plan synthesis reports, CEDAW reporting, and Universal Periodic Review processes	Ensure care policy reporting includes climate-disaggregated data, e.g. time-use data broken down by climate vulnerability context. Use CEDAW reporting cycles to hold governments accountable for operationalizing the climate dimensions of care commitments. Flag gaps between normative recognition and operational delivery in national care policy reviews.	Ensure that reporting on implementation of Rio Convention frameworks and their gender action plans includes references to care work, including time-use data on unpaid care work, where available. In UNFCCC, use synthesis reporting cycles at COP32, COP35 and COP38 for the implementation of gender-responsive climate policies, plans, strategies and actions as accountability mechanisms. Advocate for care workload indicators to be included in NDC transparency frameworks such as the Enhanced Transparency Framework. ¹¹⁰

Process moment	What it involves	Care frameworks	Climate and environment frameworks
 Implementation	Translation of normative commitments into national plans, strategies and programmes, including national care roadmaps, land degradation neutrality targets, NAPs and NBSAPs	Advocate for climate risk assessments to inform the design of care services and infrastructure in national care roadmaps. Support line ministries to develop cross-sectoral implementation plans that connect care and climate mandates. Use the 6R framework as a tool for assessing whether implementation addresses the full scope of care system transformation in climate-stressed contexts.	Advocate for care infrastructure, water and sanitation, clean energy, health services and childcare to be recognized as climate adaptation expenditure in NAPs and national implementation frameworks. Support environment ministries to engage care and social protection counterparts in NDC and NBSAP implementation planning.
 Budgeting	Allocation of public finance, climate finance and development assistance to support normative commitments, including through GCF financing plans, national gender-responsive budgets and NDC financing frameworks	Advocate for care-responsive budgeting that accounts for climate-driven increases in care workloads. Ensure national care budgets include provisions for climate resilience of care infrastructure. Push for loss and damage mechanisms to compensate care-related climate costs in national social protection frameworks. Use the UN Women Engendering Fiscal Space framework as a normative tool for integrating care into national fiscal policy.	<p>Advocate for care infrastructure to be recognized as an eligible and measurable climate finance outcome in the GCF, Adaptation Fund and other environment funding project screening criteria and multilateral development bank financing. Push for loss and damage mechanisms to account for care-related climate costs. Advocate for care to be named in NDC financing plans as a legitimate climate adaptation expenditure. Ensure women's organizations are resourced to participate meaningfully in climate finance processes.</p> <p>The Adaptation Fund's gender analysis guidance includes identifying and budgeting for reductions in unpaid care workloads. Centering Care in Climate Finance argues that this existing model could serve as a precedent for other climate funds to adopt similarly explicit care-budgeting requirements within their own gender policies.¹¹¹</p>

Note: To support engagement with normative processes, please also see [Annex 2: Key messages](#).

BOX 6**PRACTICAL TOOLS FOR NORMATIVE ENGAGEMENT**

The following tools are particularly relevant for those working to advance integration of climate or care across the process moments described above.

- **Agreed language** is the foundation of normative advocacy. Text that has already been agreed by Member States in one framework, for example the Belém GAP's naming of care work or CEDAW General Recommendation 37's treatment of gender and disaster risk reduction, can be used as a normative hook in other frameworks, framing the ask as implementing existing commitments rather than introducing new ones. Building a bank of agreed care–climate language across care and climate frameworks establishes ready-made text for drafting and negotiation moments.
- **Side events and parallel events** at COPs, CSW and regional conferences provide opportunities to build visibility for care–climate integration outside formal negotiation rooms, convene cross-sectoral audiences, and test language and framing with government delegates and civil society partners before it enters formal text.
- **Shadow reporting and civil society submissions** to CEDAW and Rio Convention reporting processes allow care–climate links to be introduced into accountability mechanisms from outside formal government processes, building the evidentiary record that can support future normative integration.
- **Coalition-building across care and climate constituencies**, bringing together women's organizations, care worker unions, environmental and climate justice movements, and Indigenous peoples' organizations, is essential for sustained normative advocacy. The Belém GAP's explicit naming of care work was achieved through sustained civil society advocacy coordinated across these constituencies; maintaining and strengthening those coalitions is a condition for continued progress.
- **The concentrated COP calendar**, with CBD COP, UNCCD COP, UNFCCC COP and CSW all often falling within a short window, can be used as an opportunity to advance consistent care language simultaneously across multiple normative processes, building synergies rather than approaching each convention in isolation.

CASE STUDIES:**NORMATIVE INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE****■ BOLIVIA****(Recognize, Redistribute, Resource)**

Bolivia is simultaneously developing a national care policy and a Climate Change and Gender Action Plan, with both processes deliberately designed to reflect each other. This represents the strongest currently available model of normative policy coherence at the country level, with care and climate integration built into the design of both frameworks from the outset rather than retrofitted after adoption. The Bolivia case is particularly significant as a replicable model: it demonstrates that policy coherence is achievable when both processes are resourced and timed together, and that the gap between care and climate normative frameworks is as much a planning and coordination challenge as a political one.

■ COLOMBIA**(Recognize, Redistribute)**

Colombia's National Care Policy ([CONPES 4143](#)), supported by UN Women's [Caring Societies](#) project, explicitly integrates a climate perspective, extending the concept of care beyond human beings to include the maintenance of nature and territories. The action plan identifies the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Mines and Energy, and the Mining and Energy Planning Unit as entities responsible for strategic actions. These actions include designing climate resilience strategies for rural women's organizations and integrating environmental defenders into environmental sector plans and projects. The policy formally recognizes women working on environmental issues as caregivers. It extends the category of care work to include environmental stewardship, and names the climate dimension of care workloads within the domestic care policy framework, demonstrating that national care policies can serve as the primary vehicle for care–climate normative integration rather than requiring a separate climate instrument. This approach is deeply rooted in the principle of interdependence between all living beings and their surroundings, establishing that the care of life is fundamentally inseparable from the protection of nature.

■ SENEGAL**(Recognize, Redistribute)**

UN Women's work in Senegal has integrated care into the local development plans of eight municipalities, linking increased care workloads in climate-frontline communities to municipal policy responses. This demonstrates that care–climate links can be embedded in local governance frameworks, not only national or intergovernmental ones, and that municipal development planning is an accessible entry point at the country level.

■ NIGERIA AND LIBERIA**(Represent)**

UN Women's West Africa Regional Office has supported the Governments of Nigeria and Liberia in embedding gender considerations into their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). The next programmatic frontier is the integration of the care–climate nexus into the NDC financing plans, the stage at which countries articulate investment strategies to operationalize their commitments. This approach is advanced through multi-stakeholder dialogues that convene ministries of finance and environment alongside other key actors, creating the joint ownership necessary for care infrastructure to be recognized as a legitimate climate adaptation investment. By bringing the right institutions together in a shared process, in line with its coordination mandate, UN Women has helped ensure that gender-responsive climate action is elevated from a siloed social add-on to a central pillar of sustainable development and resilience.

5. PROGRAMMATIC LANDSCAPE AND ENTRY POINTS

This section moves from framework to practice, examining the design conditions that have made integration effective, what barriers remain, and how practitioners have integrated care and climate across programming. It is organized around two entry points: for practitioners working to integrate care into climate policy programmes, and for practitioners working to integrate climate dimensions into care programmes in climate-stressed contexts. Note that these are mutually constitutive and deeply intertwined dimensions of a single system; solutions should therefore be designed with this interdependence explicitly in mind.

TABLE 4
Programmatic entry points

Design conditions	Barriers
 Integrating care into climate and environment programmes	
<p>Convene care, environment and climate actors together rather than sequentially. Policy and programmatic coherence requires joint ownership from the start, as care and climate practitioners working in parallel without a shared design process will produce parallel rather than integrated outcomes. This requires a transdisciplinary approach that brings together expertise from climate and conservation science, gender and care analysis, public policy, economics, infrastructure planning and community knowledge systems from the outset, rather than treating these as separate inputs.</p> <p>Link care–climate programme interventions explicitly to at least one formal policy commitment, such as a NBSAP, NDC, NAP or a national care policy, from the outset. Creating a formal accountability hook makes outcomes trackable, enables reporting against existing commitments, and positions care integration as implementing what has already been agreed. This ensures that care-related interventions and climate commitments are mutually reinforcing within the same governance architecture, rather than being treated as separate policy streams.</p>	<p>Siloed ministry structures are a primary structural barrier. Care sits in social affairs or gender ministries, while climate sits in environment or finance ministries. There is often no natural convening mechanism across these; UN Women is positioned to fill this gap through its cross-mandate role.</p> <p>Short political cycles make multi-year policy coherence work vulnerable to government transitions. Care–climate integration that depends on political champions rather than institutional processes is difficult to sustain across election cycles.</p>

Design conditions	Barriers
 Integrating care into climate and environment programmes	
<p>Translate care workloads into climate and environmental policy language before introducing care framing explicitly. For NDC technical teams and ministries of environment, the most resonant entry point is adaptation effectiveness and social resilience, e.g. “Investing in care systems builds the climate resilience of households and communities in ways that physical infrastructure alone cannot”, rather than leading with gender equality or care language. For CBD and NBSAP technical teams, the most resonant entry point is conservation effectiveness and ecosystem resilience, e.g. “Investing in care systems strengthens the long-term stewardship and resilience of the eco-systems that conservation programmes depend on, in ways that protected-area status alone cannot.”</p> <p>Make the link between care and green jobs explicit. Women’s heavy care workloads are a primary structural barrier to their equal participation in and benefits from just transitions to low-carbon sustainable economies, which requires simultaneous care redistribution.¹¹² This translates the care agenda into green economy terms that resonate with environment audiences.</p> <p>Make care redistribution an explicit programme outcome rather than a byproduct. Distinguish between reducing indirect care workloads through time-saving technologies, and redistributing direct care responsibilities towards men, the state, and community institutions. The 6R framework provides the structured language for making this distinction in programme design. Without complementary work on social norms and care redistribution, saved time is frequently absorbed by other unpaid tasks rather than redirected to education, income-generation or rest.</p> <p>Design for the full care diamond. Climate and conservation programme designers need to understand that care is organized across four spheres – household, state, market and community – not only the household. Interventions that address only one sphere frequently miss other dimensions that are essential for sustained care redistribution. Use the care diamond as a diagnostic at the programme design stage to identify which spheres are being engaged and which are being overlooked.</p> <p>Identify solutions with communities rather than imposing them from outside. Engage communities, and within communities, women, in identifying what solutions would work in their specific context, before designing interventions.</p> <p>Identify and support a government champion who spans both policy domains. Where no natural champion exists, UN Women can play a convening and bridge-building role across line ministries.</p> <p>Build government conceptual capacity alongside policy advocacy. Evidence suggests that the gap is often one of understanding rather than political will, making capacity-building the entry point rather than advocacy alone.</p> <p>Explicitly recognize paid and unpaid care workers as frontline climate service providers. Domestic workers, waste pickers, community health workers, and traditional midwives and healers are already providing climate adaptation and mitigation functions.¹¹³ Programme design should identify and formally recognize the care workers already providing climate services in a given context, rather than treating care workforce integration as a separate or additional programme component.</p>	<p>Effective integration is often constrained by a mutual lack of familiarity between care and climate policy domains. NDC technical teams and environment ministry staff often have limited to no conceptual framework for care work, and care practitioners often have limited familiarity with climate policy processes. This mutual unfamiliarity requires investment in capacity-building on both sides before integrated advocacy can be effective.</p> <p>Resilience framing without redistribution risks reinforcing unequal care systems. Framing women as resilience builders without providing structural support loads more unpaid labour onto already overworked women while generating positive optics for programmes. Avoiding this requires building explicit redistribution outcomes into programme design from the start.¹¹⁴</p> <p>Programming that does not account for how ‘care-as-infrastructure’ framing is understood locally risks losing political traction, even when it is technically sound.¹¹⁵ Invest in narratives and framing, not only technical design. This aligns with UN Women’s ‘Ideologies, Institutions and Power’ framework, which identifies shifting narratives as one of three core pathways for addressing discriminatory social norms, alongside changing material conditions and strengthening countervailing power through women’s organizations.¹¹⁶</p>

Design conditions	Barriers
 Integrating climate into care programmes	
<p>Conduct territorial diagnosis before programme design. Map how climate impacts, flood, drought, temperature change, seasonal shifts and soil degradation are translated into specific care workload increases in the local context before designing interventions. The Argentina territorial diagnosis model outlined in the case studies below is a clear available example. This will help ensure programme design responds to actual local care–climate dynamics rather than national averages that may not capture the most climate-vulnerable communities.</p> <p>Design for the full care diamond. In climate-stressed contexts, community care organized by civil society organizations and women’s organizations is frequently doing the most work and receiving the least support, and is often the first sphere to be overwhelmed when climate shocks intensify care demands. Programme design should explicitly assess and support the community sphere alongside household, state and market dimensions of care provision.</p> <p>Build monitoring and evaluation into programme design from the start. Measure the impact of climate and conservation interventions on care outcomes, and care interventions on environmental outcomes, as a core design question. Cross-domain measurement is more straightforward when it is built in early and generates longitudinal data. Most existing evidence addresses indirect unpaid care work reduction, while the evidence base on direct care, gender-based violence, and outcomes specific to Small Island Development States (SIDS) in climate contexts remains thin.</p> <p>Design for longevity. Short project cycles are a documented barrier to care–climate integration. Advocate for multi-year programming and link programme interventions to government systems, national care roadmaps, municipal development plans, NDC and NBSAP implementation frameworks, wherever possible, to ensure that outcomes outlast individual project cycles.</p>	<p>Most existing evidence and programming addresses indirect unpaid care work, such as water, fuel and food collection, which is the most visible and most immediately measurable care pathway. Direct care in the climate context, including childcare and care for older persons or persons with disabilities, remains under-addressed.</p> <p>Gender-based violence (GBV) is an underrecognized care–climate link. Climate stressors have been found to increase GBV, with a 300 per cent rise documented following cyclones in Vanuatu, which both creates more work for caregivers and multiplies the number of people requiring care.¹¹⁷ This intersection between climate, GBV and care should be explicitly accounted for in climate-stressed contexts.</p> <p>Single-sector framing remains the dominant programme design approach. Climate programmes rarely integrate care analysis, and care programmes rarely conduct climate risk assessments. Integrated design requires a deliberate cross-sectoral mandate from the outset rather than an assumption that integration will happen organically.</p>

BOX 7

UN WOMEN’S PROGRAMMATIC FRAMEWORKS

Two of UN Women’s global programmatic frameworks under its [Women’s Economic Empowerment Strategy](#) (2024) directly address the care–climate nexus: the Transforming Care Systems framework, implemented through the [TransformCare initiative](#) across 6 regions and over 50 countries, and the Gender-Responsive Climate Action framework. The care–climate nexus sits at the intersection of both frameworks; the [UN Women Strategic Plan 2026–2029](#) and the [UN Women Climate and Environment Strategy](#) provide the overarching institutional architecture they operate within.

CASE STUDIES:**PROGRAMMATIC INTEGRATION OF CARE AND CLIMATE IN PRACTICE****■ ARGENTINA****Mapping impacts of drought and flood (Recognize)**

With the support of UN Women's TransformCare project in the Gran Chaco region of Argentina, territorial diagnosis was used in two localities (Miraflores and Libertador General San Martín) within provinces of Chaco and Jujuy to map how floods and drought are experienced differently across Indigenous and rural communities, with gendered care implications. This case is a strong model for the territorial and intersectional diagnosis phase of programme design: it demonstrates the importance of understanding how climate impacts affect care workloads and the livelihood strategies that women must deploy in a given context, rather than assuming that national or regional climate data capture the local care consequences.

■ CHINA**Women-led community green transition and governance (Recognize, Reduce, Redistribute)**

UN Women China, in partnership with national and provincial counterparts, has supported women-led rural renewable energy transitions in Qinghai Province through distributing solar energy systems, combined with skills development for women and care-related training for men. On an annual basis, the programme generates approximately 31,550 kWh of clean electricity across 20 herder households and 2 women-led agricultural cooperatives, and an estimated 121,100 Chinese Yuan (approximately \$18,000) of economic benefit. At the same time, it avoids an estimated 14 tonnes of CO₂ emissions and reduces unpaid care work by over 8,700 hours annually, primarily through reduced time spent on manual milk processing, laundry and other domestic tasks. The programme also incorporates gender-responsive capacity-building in the communities, with women training in green production and sustainable livelihoods, and men training in household and care-related responsibilities, supporting greater recognition of unpaid care work and a more equitable distribution of care responsibilities alongside climate and economic outcomes. The Qinghai case demonstrates how community-based renewable energy investments can simultaneously advance climate mitigation, strengthen rural livelihoods and transform gendered care arrangements. It provides a replicable model for integrating care redistribution and women's economic empowerment into rural green transition programming.

■ COLOMBIA**Eco-efficient stoves (Reduce, Reward)**

UN Women Colombia is partnering with a regional environmental authority (Corporación Autónoma Regional-CRC) on a project distributing eco-efficient stoves to rural women in two municipalities, with the environmental authority co-leading and UN Women measuring how reduced timber use translates into decreased care workloads for women. The authority has demonstrated an interest in integrating a gender perspective into its work and participating in the territorial care agenda, as reflected in its partnership with the Municipality of Popayán to strengthen institutional and environmental capacity-building processes based on the principle of shared responsibility for the care of life. The project is notable as an early example of an environmental authority seeking to understand and document the care co-benefits of a climate intervention, rather than the reverse.

■ COLOMBIA

National Care Policy (CONPES 4143) (Recognize)

Approved in February 2025, Colombia's National Care Policy explicitly recognizes and strengthens the collective and community care practices of ethnic peoples and *campesino* (rural farming) communities "as a pillar of the sustenance of human and non-human life, interdependent in all its expressions".¹¹⁸ CONPES 4143 is notable as the first national care policy to embed a beyond-human, territorial understanding of care within the policy instrument itself, rather than treating climate or environmental dimensions as a co-benefit of care programming: caring for water, land and biodiversity is understood as constitutive of, not adjacent to, caring for people.

■ CÔTE D'IVOIRE AND MALI

National care roadmaps (Recognize, Reduce, Redistribute, Resource)

Both countries have developed national care roadmaps using the 6R framework, with national care committees established for follow-up on implementation and investments. Both countries face acute climate vulnerability, creating an active window for integrating climate dimensions into the roadmap monitoring phase; specifically, for including climate-related care workload indicators in the performance frameworks used by the national care committees. The Côte d'Ivoire and Mali cases illustrate how the 6R framework can serve as the vehicle for care–climate normative integration at the country level, by systematically embedding climate-responsive activities into the implementation and monitoring of care roadmaps from the outset.

■ INDONESIA

Community-level co-design (Reduce, Redistribute)

The Climate Care Hub is an emerging model for community-level co-design that simultaneously addresses Intersection 1 (climate change intensifying care demands) and Intersection 2 (climate change weakening care systems) of UN Women's Care–Climate framework by building integrated care and climate resilience infrastructure, such as community-based childcare linked with women-managed community gardens and shared community learning spaces for climate-resilient agriculture, at the community level.

■ MALI

Integrating care workload reduction and environmental restoration (Reduce, Resource)

The Climate and Energy Mali (CEMALI) programme trained women in the production of improved cookstoves and sustainable fuels alongside reforestation and forest management activities.¹¹⁹ CEMALI is a strong model of programming that simultaneously addresses multiple Rio Convention domains – UNFCCC (emissions reduction through clean cooking) and UNCCD (land and forest restoration) – and care workload reduction, within a single intervention logic. The programme's reductions in biomass consumption and greenhouse gas emissions have also opened a potential pathway to green finance. By generating and selling carbon credits on the international market, CEMALI-type initiatives could secure additional financial resources to expand training, support women's economic activities and strengthen the sustainability of programming, offering a model for financing gender equality and community-based climate mitigation through market-based mechanisms.

■ NIGERIA

Biogas reducing fuel collection time and improving air quality (Reduce, Resource)

Women-led cooperatives producing biogas for household cooking and selling surplus biogas and bio-slurry fertilizer are simultaneously reducing fuel collection times, improving household air quality and generating income. The Nigeria biogas programme, documented as a UN Women West Africa Regional Office best practice, demonstrates a clear integrated care–climate income logic, designing care workload reduction, climate mitigation and economic empowerment as a single intervention.¹²⁰

■ GLOBAL

UN Women TransformCare Global Initiative

(Recognize, Reduce, Redistribute, Reward, Represent, Resource)

Implemented across more than 50 countries and 6 regions, TransformCare advances a vision of care as a public good, skilled and essential work, and the foundation of equality and shared economic prosperity. In the Asia-Pacific region, the initiative integrates care and climate linkages as a core programmatic pillar, providing a practical model for how regional care frameworks can incorporate climate dimensions. Complementing this initiative, UN Women's [Caring Societies, Inclusive and Green Economies in Asia and the Pacific](#) (2024) provides an important evidence layer, documenting the intersections between care workloads, green economy access and climate vulnerability across the region.

UN Women Gender-Responsive Climate Action and Green/Blue Economies Accelerator framework

(Recognize, Reduce, Represent, Resource)

The Accelerator framework positions care at the centre of gender-responsive just transition policies and programmes to shape economies that advance sustainable development while upholding human rights and the principle of leaving no one behind. It anchors decent work in care services as a core success criterion for green transition programming, not a co-benefit, while acknowledging that, for an intervention on women's climate and environment action to be sustainable, it must contribute to decreasing unpaid care and domestic work. It builds on UN Women's flagship [Women's Empowerment through Climate Resilient Agriculture](#) programme and several joint initiatives, and aligns with the Generation Equality Forum's [Feminist Action for Climate Justice Action Coalition](#). The Accelerator demonstrates how care reduction can be built into the design logic of just transition programming.

6. COORDINATION LANDSCAPE AND ENTRY POINTS

This section maps the entry points where advocacy can advance the care–climate nexus at global and regional coordination levels. While normative and programmatic work require engagement with specific governments, ministries and implementing partners, coordination work creates the conditions for system-wide coherence, ensuring that care and climate are addressed not in parallel silos but as interconnected agendas across the UN system.

6.1 THE GLOBAL-LEVEL COORDINATION LANDSCAPE

- [The UNFCCC Women and Gender Constituency \(WGC\)](#) coordinates civil society advocacy across UNFCCC negotiations. It was central to securing the Belém GAP’s inclusion of care work, making it a key entry point for sustained advocacy on care in future COP decisions.
- [The CBD Women’s Caucus](#) helped secure the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework’s standalone gender equality target (Target 23) and its accompanying Gender Plan of Action. It is an important partner for advancing care-related language in future CBD gender decisions.
- [The UNCCD Gender Caucus](#) serves as an advocacy platform and technical advisor during UNCCD COP sessions, offering a direct channel for raising unpaid care work within discussions on land degradation neutrality.
- [The Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality \(IANWGE\)](#) is the largest gender-specific coordination body in the UN system.¹²¹ The annual IANWGE meeting is a key moment for advancing care–climate messaging across the UN system; messages agreed here feed directly into CSW advocacy.
- [The Global Alliance for Care](#), a key multi-stakeholder platform for policy advocacy and learning on care system transformation,¹²² brings together governments, civil society and UN entities. It can introduce climate dimensions into the global care coordination architecture, and advocate that care–climate integration be built into policy advocacy.
- [The UN Gender Equality Acceleration Plan \(GEAP\) 2024–2030](#) provides a system-wide coordination framework and is an important tool for embedding care–climate links across UN system programming and accountability.¹²³

- The [UN Environmental Management Group \(EMG\)](#) and the newly established Issues Management Group on Gender and Environment is the UN system's principal system-wide coordination body on the environment and human settlements. The EMG identifies environmental issues requiring cross-agency cooperation and organizes its work through Issue Management Groups (IMGs).
- [Generation Equality](#) set in motion a five-year Global Acceleration Plan delivered through six multi-stakeholder Action Coalitions, due to conclude in 2026.¹²⁴ The [Feminist Action for Climate Justice Action Coalition](#) is the coalition advancing the care–climate nexus content, and is one of the leaders on the nexus within the UNFCCC and its annual COPs.¹²⁵
- UN inter-agency processes on the Rio Conventions, including the inter-agency working groups supporting national governments on Belém GAP implementation, and the inter-agency processes coordinating gender inputs into CBD and UNCCD COP preparations, provide further coordination entry points.

BOX 8

RECOGNIZING AND ENABLING GLOBAL COALITIONS AND WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS

Progress on the care–climate nexus, including the Belém GAP's historic naming of care work, has been driven by sustained civil society advocacy, particularly by feminist climate justice and care movements working in coordination. The Women and Gender Constituency of UNFCCC, CBD Women's Caucus, UNCCD Gender Caucus, Feminist Action for Climate Justice (FACJ) initiative and the Gender Environment Data Alliance (GEDA) are key civil society actors in this space, alongside the Global Alliance for Care and the Just Transition and Care Network. Women environmental human rights defenders, often operating outside formal coalition structures and at significant personal risk, are also central to this advocacy, protecting the land, water and ecosystems on which care systems depend. Their protection and recognition should therefore be treated as integral to, not separate from, this agenda.

UN Women's role is not only to use and cite these activists and initiatives as resources but to actively enable and widen the movements behind them, resourcing their participation in normative processes, providing technical support on advocacy language, and ensuring they are recognized as rights-holders with expertise rather than only as stakeholders. Enabling rather than overworking these movements is a strategic contribution to advancing the nexus.

6.2 THE REGIONAL- AND COUNTRY-LEVEL COORDINATION LANDSCAPES

At the regional and country levels, coordination entry points are more varied and context-dependent. The most effective approach is often not to establish new care–climate coordination mechanisms, but

to bring the care–climate nexus into existing strong coordination mechanisms, working groups, task forces and inter-agency platforms that already have convening power and government engagement.

- **UN country team coordination mechanisms** are the primary entry points for care–climate coordination at the country level. UN Women works with Resident Coordinators and other UN entities through UN Country Teams (UNCTs), leading Gender Theme Groups (GTGs) and actively engaging in joint results groups and programmes. GTGs, currently operational in more than 100 country teams globally, typically co-chaired by UN Women and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), are inter-agency coordination groups that provide strategic support and advice to UNCTs on gender mainstreaming. GTGs serve as the key mechanism through which UN Women can advance the care–climate nexus in UN system coordination at country level.¹²⁶ For example:
 - In Pakistan, the GTG co-chaired by UN Women and UNFPA coordinates joint advocacy with government on gender equality dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals, a model that can be used to introduce care–climate links into UNCT joint programming and advocacy.
 - Joint Results Groups, thematic groups organized around specific outcome areas under the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, provide a further entry point. Where a results group covers sustainable development, environment or climate, UN Women’s and partners’ participation can introduce care as a dimension of the group’s climate work. Where a results group covers gender equality or social protection, it can be used to introduce climate action as a dimension of care programming.
- **The formulation window of national care policies and plans is a high-leverage coordination entry point.** Once a national care law or policy is adopted, the period during which the implementing plan, with its actions, targets and indicators, is being formulated represents a narrow but critical window in which climate dimensions can still be built in before the plan’s architecture is fixed. Where the country context makes adaptation of a law or policy difficult, a proposed roadmap or multi-stakeholder process can be designed and used as validation, as this can require less political buy-in and may be a less time-intensive process.
- **Care working groups** have been established in several countries. Where such groups exist, they provide a coordination mechanism for introducing climate dimensions, specifically, by advocating that national care committees and care working groups include climate vulnerability assessments and climate-responsive indicators in their monitoring frameworks. For example:
 - In Nepal, a National Care Working Group was established under the leadership of the National Planning Commission, providing a government-led mechanism for advancing the care agenda across ministries.¹²⁷

- The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) TransformCare South Asia ministerial dialogue (May 2026), co-organized by UN Women and the SAARC Secretariat, represents a parallel regional coordination development. This is the first time the care system has been positioned as a strategic pillar for regional cooperation in South Asia, creating a new intergovernmental coordination architecture that can be used to advance care–climate integration across the subregion.¹²⁸
- **Climate coordination mechanisms at the country level**, including coordination groups supporting NDC implementation, National Adaptation Plan development and Rio Convention national focal point networks, are the entry point for introducing care as a category into climate coordination. For example:
 - UN Women’s engagement in NDC financing plan dialogues in Nigeria and Liberia, described in the case studies in Section 4, illustrates how country-level climate coordination can serve as a programmatic entry point.
 - UN Women and partners working in similar contexts should look for equivalent NDC financing plan processes, National Adaptation Plan coordination groups and Rio Convention focal point networks as the primary coordination entry points.

KEY TAKEAWAY

The principle of integration over proliferation applies particularly at the country level. Rather than advocating for the creation of new care–climate coordination mechanisms, which can be resource-intensive and may lack political support, UN Women country offices should assess which existing coordination mechanisms have the strongest convening power and government engagement, and bring the care–climate nexus into those. The most effective coordination entry points are those where the relevant actors are already working together and collaborating.

7. EVIDENCE AND RESEARCH NEEDS

This section maps key evidence and research gaps to inform research agendas, partnerships and advocacy. These are organized by whether they can be addressed through synthesis of existing literature, or require new primary research and data investment. The care–climate nexus is a growing field, but the evidence base remains uneven.

7.1 ADDRESSING EVIDENCE GAPS THROUGH SYNTHESIS OF EXISTING LITERATURE

- **Direct care in the climate context:** Most data on care come from disaster-specific studies and single-country surveys rather than a comparable evidence base across contexts, and tend to address indirect care tasks such as water collection. Direct care, such as childcare, care for older persons, care for persons with disabilities, and care for survivors of climate-related gender-based violence, is even less documented. A systematic review bridging both direct and indirect care would fill a significant gap, informing programme design and normative advocacy.
- **The biodiversity–health–care nexus:** Evidence on biodiversity loss and care work spans three fields – public health (infectious disease and ecosystem health), ethnobotany (traditional medicine) and agricultural science (agrobiodiversity and food security) – but remains fragmented and is rarely analysed through a care lens. The CBD’s Decision 16/19 on Biodiversity and Health (COP16, 2024)¹²⁹ recognizes these interlinkages but does not name care work explicitly. Each connection generates distinct care workloads: infectious disease increases demand for direct care; loss of medicinal plants erodes community-level health capacity; and agrobiodiversity loss increases food insecurity and women’s indirect care workload. A synthesis review bridging these disciplinary streams, centring Indigenous women’s traditional ecological knowledge as a common thread across all three, would be a significant contribution.
- **The care sector as a climate solution:** A growing but dispersed body of literature addresses care jobs, social infrastructure and climate resilience as connected themes, from macro-level investment analyses to enterprise-level evidence. A scoping review of this literature would consolidate the investment case evidence, identify where evidence specific to low- and middle-income (LMIC) countries is emerging, and help make a strong argument for care as a pillar of just transition financing.¹³⁰ This gap is particularly acute in the just transition space, where the evidence base on care jobs, green economy access and social infrastructure remains concentrated in OECD settings. A global study commissioned by UN Women will assess the impact of different low-carbon transition scenarios on job creation and job access by sex, age and employment status (formal/informal). This will provide evidence, for the first time, that investments in the care sector not only enhance overall employment effects, but also enhance women’s access to green jobs in traditionally male-dominated sectors such as renewable energy, transport and waste management.¹³¹ Data will be available globally and by geographic

regions and income groupings. The methodology, developed jointly with Cambridge Econometrics, could form the basis for future research partnerships, including work on low-carbon transition scenarios tailored to specific countries.

- **Unpaid care work and loss and damage:** An Oxfam report from Bangladesh provides one of the first quantitative analyses directly linking climate vulnerability levels and unpaid care hours, finding that care workloads increase significantly for low-income women in areas of high climate vulnerability.¹³² The report makes a significant normative argument: that care-related impacts, including the increased time costs imposed by climate disasters and slow-onset environmental degradation, must be formally recognized within loss and damage policy frameworks and finance mechanisms. This argument creates an opening to advocate for care as a recognized category within the Loss and Damage Fund, not only within adaptation and mitigation frameworks. The methodology can be replicated across other climate-vulnerable contexts to build the comparative evidence base needed for normative advocacy.
- **Data tagging and intersection analysis:** Relevant care and climate data already exist in time-use surveys, NDC monitoring frameworks, humanitarian needs assessments and climate vulnerability indices, but they are not tagged or analysed at the intersection. A systematic effort to identify and re-analyse existing datasets through a care–climate lens, using the Guatemala geospatial/time-use methodology as a model, could generate significant new insights without requiring new primary data collection.¹³³ The methodology links time-use data with geospatial data on climate vulnerability to assess the impact of environmental degradation, especially deforestation and climate variability, on time use and access to income, disaggregated by sex, geographic location and other factors. Replicating this methodology would directly address the subnational data gap that practitioners consistently identify as a barrier to programme design and advocacy.

7.2 EVIDENCE GAPS REQUIRING NEW RESEARCH AND INVESTMENT

- **Impact of low-carbon, time-saving technologies on care reorganization:** Existing evidence shows that access to modern energy services, clean cooking, water filters and electrification, can reduce the time and effort spent on unpaid care and domestic work. What is not documented is what happens to that time: whether it is redistributed to rest, education or paid work, redirected to other unpaid tasks, or absorbed by previously unmet direct care needs. This is a critical gap, since the care co-benefit of low-carbon technology depends on genuine redistribution, not just time savings. Longitudinal research tracking time reallocation after technology adoption, built into programme monitoring from the outset, would clarify how gender-responsive energy transitions can maximize care, equality and climate co-benefits.
- **Middle East and North Africa (MENA) regional evidence:** MENA is the region with the least-developed evidence base on the care–climate nexus, despite experiencing acute climate vulnerability, severe water scarcity and high land degradation. This absence limits UN Women's ability to ground advocacy in contextually specific data; the frameworks in this Guidance Note are drawn primarily from Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and South and Southeast Asia.

- **Subnational time-use data linked to climate variables:** National time-use averages mask care–climate dynamics in the most climate-vulnerable communities, where the nexus is most acute. The Guatemala geospatial/time-use study, linking time-use data with climate vulnerability to demonstrate local impacts on time and income poverty, provides a methodological model that can be replicated. Replication should prioritize MENA, South and Southeast Asia, and SIDS contexts, where subnational data are most lacking, starting with an assessment of which countries have sufficiently representative subnational time-use survey data.
- **Just transitions and care outside OECD settings:** As noted above, the research base on care and just transitions, care jobs as green jobs, care infrastructure as adaptation investment, and care redistribution as a condition of equitable transition, is growing but concentrated in OECD settings, limiting its applicability for advocacy in the Global South. A methodology commissioned by UN Women to assess the job creation potential and carbon footprint of investments in the care sector versus other sectors across OECD countries provides robust evidence for the argument that care jobs are quintessentially green jobs.¹³⁴ It also provides a methodology for replication in LMIC contexts, which could form the basis of future research partnerships across UN Women, regional and country offices.¹³⁵
- **Compound crises:** Where climate shocks interact with conflict, economic crises, pandemics or humanitarian emergencies, remains one of the least understood areas of this nexus, despite evidence that they can dramatically intensify unpaid care work and weaken care systems simultaneously. Because these crises compound rather than simply add to one another, single-crisis findings may not hold in compound-crisis settings, making this a strategic priority for future research.
- **Artificial intelligence (AI) and digital care technologies:** Use of new technologies, ranging from telemedicine to AI-assisted caregiving tools, may transform how care is organized and delivered. However, little is known about whether digitalization reduces, redistributes or intensifies unpaid care work, particularly for low-income women with limited digital access. Evidence on these technologies' own climate footprint, and how their use impacts care outcomes, is similarly absent.
- **Energy poverty as a driver of increased care work:** The relationship between energy access and unpaid care work is increasingly documented for specific interventions, such as clean cooking and electrification. However, less is known about energy poverty as a systemic driver of care poverty more broadly, including its cumulative effects and interaction with other infrastructure deprivation.

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: TOOLS AND RESOURCES

This section brings together the key resources, frameworks and tools for understanding and responding to the care–climate nexus.

A. CARE RESOURCES

[Transforming Care Systems in the Context of the Sustainable Development Goals and Our Common Agenda](#), United Nations (2024). **Policy paper.** UN system-wide framework on care systems governance, definitions and components.

[A Toolkit on Paid and Unpaid Care Work: From 3Rs to 5Rs](#), UN Women (2022). **Practitioner toolkit.** Core practitioner reference for care definitions, the care diamond, and the 6R framework.

[Addressing Care in Times of Conflict and Crisis: Guidance Note](#), UN Women (2025). **Guidance Note.** Bridges the women, peace and security (WPS), humanitarian action and women's economic empowerment agendas to advance a gender-responsive approach to care in crises and conflicts.

[Engendering Fiscal Space: A Policy Framework for Financing Gender Equality](#), UN Women (2025). **Research paper.** UN Women's institutional framework for gender-responsive fiscal space analysis; directly applicable in engagement with finance audiences on care–climate investment.

[Transformative Approaches to Recognize, Reduce and Redistribute Unpaid Care Work In Women's Economic Empowerment Programming](#),

UN Women (2024). **Evaluation report.** Independent evaluation of the 3R Programme in Rwanda, Senegal and South Africa; an important UN Women evidence base for what works in care redistribution programming.

[Investing in the Care Economy: A step-by-step guide for measuring gaps, costs, and returns on investing in care services sectors](#), UN Women (2026). **Practitioner toolkit.** Provides methodology to analyse coverage gaps in paid care services, estimate the costs required to close these gaps, and assess the potential economic and social returns of increased public investments in care services.

[Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work](#), ILO (2018). **Research report.** Foundational ILO report on the scale and policy dimensions of care work globally.

[No Time to Rest: Women's Lived Experiences Balancing Paid Work and Unpaid Care Work](#), D. Chopra and E. Zambelli/Institute of Development Studies (2017). **Research report.** Qualitative evidence on the lived experience of care workloads; useful for grounding quantitative data in practitioner and advocacy communications.

B. CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT RESOURCES

[Climate and Environment Strategy](#), UN Women (2026). **Strategy.** UN Women's framework for women's rights, resilience and leadership in climate action.

[Gender-Differentiated and Age-Specific Risks of Heat Stress in a Warming World: Implications for Equality and Resilience](#), V. Nyirongo/UN Women (2026). **Research report.** UN Women research on gender- and age-differentiated heat stress risks.

[Belém Gender Action Plan](#), UNFCCC COP30 (2025). **Intergovernmental framework.** The UNFCCC's third-generation GAP (2025–2034), the first to name care work explicitly. The primary normative hook for UNFCCC advocacy on care.

[The Enhanced Lima Work Programme on Gender](#), UNFCCC (2025). **Intergovernmental framework.** The predecessor gender architecture to the Belém GAP; relevant for understanding the history of gender mainstreaming in the UNFCCC.

[Thematic Assessment Report on the Interlinkages among Biodiversity, Water, Food and Health of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services](#), IPBES (2024).

Scientific assessment. Scientific assessment linking biodiversity, climate, food, water and health.

[Gender Action Plan to Support Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030](#), UNDRR/UN Women/UNFPA (2024).

Intergovernmental framework. The disaster risk reduction gender architecture; relevant for practitioners working on care and climate disaster response.

[Advancing Gender-Responsive Synergies Across the Rio Conventions](#), UN Women (2024). **Working paper.**

UN Women paper on gender coordination across the three Rio Conventions.

[Feminist Climate Justice: A Framework for Action](#),

UN Women (2023). **Conceptual framework.**

UN Women's feminist climate justice framework and intersectionality lens.

[CBD Gender Plan of Action](#), CBD (2022).

Intergovernmental framework. The CBD's gender mainstreaming roadmap; provides entry points for introducing care language in biodiversity governance.

[Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#), CBD COP15 (2022). **Intergovernmental framework.**

Includes Target 23 on gender equality; the primary normative entry point for care advocacy in the CBD process.

[UNCCD Gender Action Plan](#), UNCCD (2018).

Intergovernmental framework. The UNCCD's gender architecture for the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework; the normative entry point for care advocacy in land degradation contexts.

C. RESOURCES ADDRESSING THE CARE–CLIMATE INTERSECTION

[Gender Equality and Climate Policy Scorecard](#),

UN Women/Kaschak Institute (2025). **Accountability tool.** Analyses NDCs across six gender dimensions, including unpaid care work; the primary evidence source for the integration gap in national climate frameworks.

[The Climate–Care Nexus: Addressing the Linkages Between Climate Change and Women's and Girls' Unpaid Care, Domestic and Communal Work](#),

UN Women (2023). **Working paper.** The primary UN Women working paper framing the care–climate nexus. The foundational internal source for the Guidance Note's conceptual basis and UN Women's institutional framing of the nexus.

[Financing Gender Equality in the Green Transition in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Toolkit to Integrate Gender in Climate Policies](#), UN Women (2025). **Toolkit.**

Sector-by-sector toolkit integrating unpaid care work into NDC and NAP design.

[Gender and Biodiversity: A Data Brief](#), UN Women

(2024). **Data brief.** Evidence on biodiversity conservation and gendered care workloads; a primary UN Women data source for the biodiversity dimension of the care–climate nexus.

[A Gender-Responsive Just Transition for People and Planet](#), UN Women (2023). **Policy brief.**

UN Women's institutional framing of the just transition agenda with a gender lens; the primary reference for just transition normative advocacy.

[Ensuring Safe and Regular Migration for Women and Girls in the Context of Climate Change](#), UN Women

(2023). **Policy brief.** Brief focused on climate-induced migration and its gender implications, including links to care; a primary source for the migration dimension of the care–climate nexus.

[Caring Societies, Inclusive, and Green Economies in Asia-Pacific](#), UN Women Asia-Pacific (2024).

Research report. Evidence base for integrated care and green economy approaches in Asia-Pacific.

"Invisible Burdens: Gender, Time, and Climate Poverty in Guatemala", S. Gammage (forthcoming).

Background paper commissioned for UN Women's Progress of the World's Women 2026: Gender Equality in the Age of Climate Crisis.

"Towards gender-just low carbon transitions: Social infrastructure investments and care jobs as 'green jobs'", J. De Henau (forthcoming). **Background paper** commissioned for Progress of the World's Women 2026: Gender Equality in the Age of Climate Crisis.

“Modelling employment impact of green transition scenario from a gender perspective”, UN Women/Cambridge Econometrics (forthcoming).

Background paper commissioned for UN Women’s Progress of the World’s Women 2026: Gender Equality in the Age of Climate Crisis.

Guatemala Geospatial and Time-Use Methodology, UN Women Research and Data (forthcoming).

Methodological tool. Links time-use data with geospatial data on climate vulnerability to demonstrate care workload intensification at the local level; a model that can be replicated for subnational care–climate evidence generation.

[Unpaid Care and Loss and Damage in Bangladesh](#), Bush et al./Oxfam (2026). **Research report.** Quantitative analysis linking climate vulnerability and unpaid care hours in Bangladesh.

[Exploring evolving policy frameworks on the care economy: is there a convergence towards a transformative care agenda?](#), I. Ilkkaracan (2026). **Journal article.** Traces the conceptual evolution of care economy framings, including ECLAC’s ‘Care Society’, the UK Women’s Budget Group’s ‘Caring Economy’, and the ‘Purple Economy’, and assesses convergence across policy frameworks.

[Centering Care in Climate Finance: A Feminist Blueprint for Adaptation, Resilience, and Climate Justice](#), Climate and Care Initiative (2025). **Working paper.** Analyses how care is addressed, or omitted, across the GCF, Adaptation Fund, and Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage, with reform pathways for each.

[Climate Change and Care Work: Integrated Solutions for Intersecting Crises](#), Climate and Care Initiative (2024).

Research report. An important external research report on the care–climate nexus; the source for the three-intersection analytical framework adapted in Section 3 of this Guidance Note.

[Non-Economic Loss and Damage \(NELD\) programme documentation](#), Climate Justice Resilience Fund (2024–ongoing). **Grantmaking programme**

documentation. Operational model for recognizing non-economic loss, including care-related loss, through participatory, community-led grantmaking across the Bay of Bengal, East Africa and the Pacific.

[Care Work in the Just Transition: Providing for People and Planet](#), UNRISD/Just Transition and Care Network (2024). **Policy brief.** Academic and policy grounding for care in the just transition.

[Caring in a Changing Climate: Unpaid Care Work and the Climate Crisis](#), MacGregor et al./Oxfam (2022). **Research report.** An important synthesis of the care–climate relationship. The report points to the need for climate initiatives to pursue gender-responsive approaches through the adoption of care-sensitive interventions.

[Gender and Climate Change Financing: Coming Out of the Margin](#), M. Williams (2015). **Comprehensive academic mapping** of gender dimensions across adaptation, mitigation and the full range of climate finance instruments.

ANNEX 2: KEY MESSAGES

KEY MESSAGES FOR CARE AUDIENCES ON INTEGRATING CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT CONSIDERATIONS

When working with colleagues and partners whose entry point is care normative frameworks, the following framing can help build the connection to climate and environmental action:

- **Anchor climate change and environment messaging in established care normative language.** Concepts such as time poverty, care workload intensification, the 6R framework and care infrastructure investment are already embedded in care normative frameworks and resonate strongly with women's economic empowerment teams, gender equality specialists and national gender equality committees. Presenting climate arguments in this language avoids framing climate as a separate or competing agenda.
- **Position climate change as an accelerant of the care crisis.** The most effective framing for care audiences presents climate and environmental change not as a new ask but as an amplifier of the same structural problem that care frameworks have long sought to address, one that makes existing normative commitments more urgent.
- **Use reversal framing** – climate impacts are actively eroding gains in girls' education, women's labour market participation and women's time for political engagement – translating the climate agenda into terms that care audiences recognize as their own.
- **Frame the ask as completing what care frameworks have already started.** Where normative recognition of climate as a driver of care inequality already exists, as in the Latin America and the Caribbean regional frameworks and in some global instruments, the entry point is operationalization: embedding climate dimensions into standards, indicators, and monitoring and evaluation frameworks, rather than making the case for recognition from scratch. Where recognition is absent, the task is introduction. The framing for care audiences is that climate integration is not a new ask but a logical extension of commitments already made.

KEY MESSAGES FOR CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT AUDIENCES ON INTEGRATING CARE

When working with partners whose entry point is climate and environmental normative frameworks, the following framing can help build the connection to care systems:

- **Lead with climate and environmental effectiveness.** For NDC technical teams, ministries of environment, CBD and UNCCD focal points, and UNFCCC negotiators, the most resonant argument is that environmental action that does not address care systems is less effective and potentially less sustainable; that the approximately 40 per cent increase in unpaid care work during droughts erodes the adaptive capacity that NDCs seek to build; and that climate and environmental interventions that fail to account for care systematically underreach the communities most exposed to environmental risk.
- **Introduce care concepts with contextualization.** Without explanation, the word 'care' may not be fully understood. For example, use 'unpaid care work' on first use, with a brief explanation of what it includes – water and fuel collection, cooking, childcare, care for older persons, etc. – before shifting to shorthand.

- **Use the Belém GAP and the Rio Convention gender action plans as normative hooks.** The Belém GAP’s explicit naming of care work as an issue for national submissions provides the entry point for UNFCCC audiences; the CBD Gender Plan of Action’s recognition of women’s roles in biodiversity stewardship provides the entry point for biodiversity audiences; and the UNCCD Gender Action Plan’s focus on women’s livelihoods in dryland contexts provides the entry point for audiences specializing in land degradation. In each case, the message is framed in terms of implementing an existing commitment rather than adding new or additional asks.
- **Use economic and investment language for finance audiences.** For ministries of finance, climate and environment fund teams, and multilateral development banks, the primary task is demonstrating that unpaid care work is a hidden cost of climate inaction; that the increase in care workloads driven by droughts, disasters and ecosystem degradation represent real economic losses that adaptation investment should address; and that care infrastructure investment generates measurable returns in adaptation effectiveness and labour market participation.

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