

HRC44 NGO Oral Statement
44th Session of the UN Human Rights Council
Annual full-day discussion on the
human rights of women
Panel 2: COVID-19 and women's rights
14 July 2020

The disproportionate impacts of the pandemic on women's rights are multiple and intersecting, and most dauntingly, they risk rolling back hard-fought gains for women's participation, economic justice, and equal rights.

Even before the pandemic, women performed three times as much unpaid care work as men, supporting daily activities of family members and communities.¹As we know, this invisible economy creates chronic time deficits that profoundly impacts women's rights to education, work, health and participation in public and political life. All conditions that tend to make women more susceptible to poverty and destitution.²

During confinement, for instance, approximately 1.5 billion students have remained at home due to school closures demanding 24-hour homecare.³ Furthermore, since health systems are operating at maximum capacity, much of the healthcare burden has shifted

¹ UN Women, 'UN Secretary-General's policy brief: The impact of COVID-19 on women', (2020), p. 13, available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/04/policy-brief-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-women>; ILO, 'Care work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work', (2018), p. xxix, available at: <https://dawnnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/ILO-2018-Care-Work-and-Care-Jobs.pdf>

² Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona, Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, A/68/293, 9 August 2013.

³ Ibid.

towards households. As women tend to be the default unpaid family caregivers, these care demands have translated into excessive care burdens for women and girls worldwide.⁴

For a just and gender-responsive recovery post-COVID-19, we need, at bear minimum, to:

- Avoid resorting to privatization and austerity measures, and instead invest to expand the coverage and benefit levels of social protection, ensuring that all women providing care are protected, whether formal or informal;
- Change gender stereotypes around the provision of care to ensure the equal distribution of care work between all men and women, and
- Ensure access to quality public infrastructure and public services, particularly health, education, elderly and childcare services.

Care work has not only been the backbone of the response to COVID-19, it ensures the sustainability of our daily lives. We must, therefore, harness this historic opportunity to transform our economy and finally recognize, reduce, and redistribute care work.

Thank you

10 July 2020

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⁴ ECLAC, 'The COVID-19 pandemic is exacerbating the care crisis in Latin America and the Caribbean' (2020), p. 2, available at: https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/45352/1/S2000260_en.pdf