



Mecanismo de Participación
de la Sociedad Civil de América
Latina y el Caribe para el
Desarrollo Sostenible - MeSCALC

**ACCELERATING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CARE SYSTEMS:
THE VOICE OF THE UN AGENCIES AND THE FEMINISTS**
December 2, 2020
12 hs. Panamá

The event took place on Wednesday, December 2, 2020, organized by the **Women's Group** of the CS Participation Mechanism from Latin American and the Caribbean for Sustainable Development –in its spanish acronym, MeSCALC-.

Mabel Bianco, president of FEIM foundation, together with Alessandra Nilo, both Focal Points of the Women's Group of the CS Participation Mechanism of ECLAC, organized this event with the aim of: -disseminating the UN document Women and ECLAC "*Care in Latin America and the Caribbean in times of COVID-19. Towards comprehensive systems to strengthen response and recovery*"; - share the observations of the feminist movement in the region through the members of the Mechanism's Women's Group and; articulate joint actions between the Agencies and the feminist movement, to accelerate the development of care systems in the countries.

Ana Guezmes, Director of the Division of Gender Affairs, ECLAC and **María Noel Vaeza**, Regional Director of UN Women for Latin America and the Caribbean presented the document prepared by the Regional Office of UN Women and ECLAC "*Care in Latin America and the Caribbean in times of COVID-19. Towards comprehensive systems to strengthen response and recovery*".

Mabel open de meeting and invite **Ana Guezmes**, she affirmed the economy of care is key to sustainable economic recovery, and requires a fiscal pact focus on women to direct resources to investment, job creation, digital and financial inclusion. In addition, she mentioned a regional gender agenda that was adopted in the different Regional Conferences on Women. It is a guide to promote reactivation strategies from a gender perspective at the regional level: raised the structural points of inequality, which is the proposal made by the region and ECLAC: drop in GDP in exports, unemployment rate and the closure of 2.7 million formal companies in the region. She also refers to the historical division of labor.

Then she reinforces other key points where she mentions:

- Poverty rate: The femininity index has grown in recent years, (118 million at the end of this year)
- Female unemployment rate: Increase of almost 6% compared to 2019
- Women who are busy in the labor economy, do so in sectors at high risk of being affected by the economic contraction.
- Extended care sector: homes, health, education. They have many elements of care when teaching and health are transferred to homes.
- The economy of care, the sustainability of life inside and outside the market. The total workload (unpaid and paid). It can be a dynamic sector if it is promoted and invested with formalization and social security.
- Demographic and epidemiological transition. The burden of communicable diseases.
- The overload of unpaid work: women dedicate three times more than men. She reaffirmed towards the end, the need to revalue and promote the shared responsibility.

Mabel thanks Ana and invites, **Maria Noel Vaeza** to present . First she mentioned the urgency to act in relation to the issue of care. She calls to break the circle between care, inequality, precariousness, exclusion and poverty of time. Secondly, the visibility of the care issue, and the investment by the States in infrastructures and networks to reactivate the economy. Then, she mentioned that the issue of “investing in care” has a **triple dividend**:
-Return of **human capital**: education and childcare allow greater physical, cognitive and intellectual development. -Return in the **creation of quality and formal employment**: give a career to the woman and the man who cares. -Return on **family incomes**: creates jobs and allows women to go to work when they leave their children, elderly or persons with disabilities (with accessible care services, she can go to work).

She reinforced the need to invest in infrastructure and transform labor markets, and **add the variable “care” in the planning, design and implementation of macroeconomic policies.**

the space

After the comments of both, Mabel opened the space to the participation of referents from CS, inviting the panelists: Dr. **Laura Pautassi**, CONICET Researcher and founder of ELA, Argentina; Lic. **Victoria Hurtado**, Corporación Humanas, Chile; Lic. **Alma Rosa Colin**, Gender Equity, Citizenship, Work and Family, Mexico

Laura Pautassi began by congratulating the study, and then mentioned three important questions to think about “in the face of the pandemic”:

First, that care integrates the economy and it is a job, but it is also a Human Right (to care, to be cared for and self-care). This possibility implies enabling obligations, but removing it from the formal salaried relationship, then it is recognized as work and care, regardless of the role that the person performs within the employment scale and thus overcomes the work-family reconciliation measures on the part of the situation. Second, that what the pandemic has shown is precisely the sustainability of life, and that the monetary economy is at its peak. Third, the element of breaking away from the idea of a democratic virus assignment. She named the concept of “syndemic” to establish that the pandemic is installed in a scenario of crisis of care, of health crisis and of structural factors of inequality. This scenario requires a comprehensive treatment in terms of thinking about solutions. Finally, she mentioned that the consideration of care as a right enables not only obligations, but also sanctions for non-compliance.

Mabel introduces **Alma Rosa Colín**, she addresses a series of points:

First, she mentioned the importance of reminding us of the problem of the unfair distribution of domestic and unpaid work. Second, she considered it is essential to have a diagnostic stage of the regulatory framework to know what we are talking about and who benefits the care system and see all the differentiation between populations, review the legislative framework in each country (to see what real possibilities exist). In another sense, also identify which are the sectors co-responsible for care, and identify what level of co-responsibility the State has in care work. Third, she considered it important to think about the needs of the populations to which they are providing care as well as the needs of the population that is currently generating care, to give real importance to the needs of each population.

And lastly, she mentioned that those responsible for territorial and urban planning are conceived as part of social policy. Since care is also passed in public spaces. This requires a technological investment in mobility and transport systems.

Then Mabel invites **Victoria Hurtado**, she began by mentioning that we have to start from the economy and justify the profitability and effectiveness of what is proposed. In relation to the Maternal Subsidy Law of Chile, where only 0.2% of the men who have access to this right decide to take leave, she stated that the right is not enough, but that duties must be defined and demanded. Since there are no complete measurements.

Finally, she mentions that there is no set of society that assumes care as a collective work. She congratulates the contribution of the document and mentions that in Chile they are already working on how to incorporate care in their Constituent process.

At the end of the speeches, Mabel opens the space for exchange and invites **Alessandra Nilo** to moderate this section. She begins by giving an account of the comments in relation to the action and adoption of habits in the face of COVID-19. She referred to the "extension of parental leave", "nursery schools from an early age", and also the context of indigenous women who still do not have the conditions to "act and communicate", including having their rights guaranteed. In addition, she mentioned a specific question addressed to Vaeza, "the redistribution of care work seems to be closely linked to the exit of women to the labor market." In this sense, what role do you assign to the current scheme of gender relations and practices between men and women in relation to the modification of this care overload? Do you think that the care of children and disabilities are only ours, of women, and how is it resolved? Another comment says that in the context of the pandemic, subsidies should be assigned that recognize care in the family income provided by the State. In addition, it requests that people with disabilities not be considered as "objects of care", but as "subjects capable of caring." And finally, how proactively providing information helps women to make more decisions and share work with men.

María Noel replied, in relation to the question, that "obviously we do not start from the premise only being the creation of a care system, so that women can go out to work", reinforcing the importance of "recognizing, redistributing and reducing, because women have the right to leisure". In addition to the need for the family to have that duty and co-responsibility to care.

Ana Guezmes reinforces the issue of the public policy approach, mentioning that the proposal being made is for a care system and policies that promote women's autonomy,

co-responsibility and transformation. Second, the intersectional issue and the need for diagnoses. On the issue of parental leave, she mentions some specific data, "a first floor has to do with a much more real change in the involvement of parents with children." She then mentions the "dimension of law" as an integral part of human rights, and refers to the importance of linking care with the sustainability of life. Finally, she relates the symbolic dimension of care and life, "let's not lose focus from where we are speaking", trying to integrate a vision of social, economic and environmental development.

Laura Pautassi insists that urgency should not win over planning strategies, "the universal must prevail over short-term solutions." As a last thought, "hopefully we can move forward in a post-pandemic scenario where we can also develop the right to not care."

Alma Colin mentioned the advance of "care as a right", where on the one hand there is an advanced discourse, but at the same time we see that the programs that provide care services are dismantled. Also, think that the care is not installed in a single sector.

Victory Hurtado sums up in one sentence: "perhaps to take advantage of this confinement and this need to be with others and with others again, and to work collectively not through screens, but to think again together about how we return to collective problems. be resolved collectively, and when we speak of that collective resolution, then we speak of a state capable of guaranteeing rights".

To close the meeting , Alessandra thanks everyone for the information and participation, as well as Mabel's moderation.

"We are talking about an issue that is fundamental, which is key to sustainable development, there is no possibility of a social pact to face the pandemic and its consequences that do not consider this issue. It is essential not only to take care of people and the planet, but also for related issues such as capacity, peace, alliances, there is nothing that can be done on this planet without us. "