JUST TRANSITION AND CARE WORK

An International Inquiry

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UNRISD
Palais des Nations, 1211 Geneva 10,
Switzerland

www.unrisd.org
info.unrisd@un.org

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Authors
Stefania Barca, Rocío Hiraldo, Dunja Krause, Eleonora Gea Piccardi, and Dimitris Stevis

Reviewers
Seema Arora-Johnsson, Lara Dominguez, Kathleen Lynch, Sherilyn MacGregor, and Nicolas Pons-Vignon

Contributors
Selma James and Nina López, Global Women Strike (international), Leddy Mozombite, Federación trabajadores y trabajadoras del hogar (Perú), Roberto Sciarelli, Rete Beni Comuni (Italy), Sandra Trafilaf, Mapuche writer and activist (Chile), Camilo Santana, Movimento dos trabalhadores rurais sem terra - MST (Brazil), María Ferreiro Santos, Sindicato Labrego Galego (Galicia, Spain), Maia Epstein, Asociación Profesionales de los Servicios Sociales (Argentina), Baba Aye, Public Services International (Nigeria), Mark Bergfeld, UNI Global Union Europa (Belgium), Susana Barria, Internacional de Servicios Públicos (Países Andinos), Eunice Chepkemoi, Ogiek Peoples› Development Programme (Kenya), Natalia Cassau De La Vega, FIRET Bomberos Forestales (Spain), Estéfany Grajales, COUNCO Comunidades Unidas (Colombia), Edel Moraes, Chico Mendes Memorial and Ministry of the Environment (Brazil), Todd Vachon, AFT American Federation of Teachers (USA), Jennyfer Cooper, National Education Union (UK), Alanah Torralba, Education International (Philippines)

UNRISD senior research specialist
Zoe Brent

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List of Acronyms

AFT	American Federation of Teachers
AI	artificial intelligence
APSS	Asociación de Profesionales de Servicio Social (Association of Social Service Professionals)
CHWs	community health workers
CNS	Conselho Nacional das Populações Extrativistas (National Council of Extractive Populations)
COUNCO	United Communities Foundation of Colombia
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
EI	Education International
ESEE	European Society for Ecological Economics
FAO	UN Food and Agriculture Organization
FENTTRAHOP	Domestic Workers' Federation of Peru
FIRET	Professional Union of Forest Firefighters
GDP	gross domestic product
GHG	greenhouse gas
GWS	Global Women's Strike
HICs	High Income Countries
IDWF	International Domestic Workers Federation
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ITUC	International Trade Union Confederation
JRT	Just Rural Transition Initiative
JTC	Just Transition and Care network
KCI	Katowice Committee of Experts
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual and other sexual orientations and gender identities
LMICs	Low- and Middle- Income Countries
MEAs	Multilateral Environmental Agreements
MST	Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (Landless Workers' Movement)
NDCs	Nationally Determined Contributions
NEU	National Education Union
NGO	non-governmental organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OPDP	Ogiek People's Development Programme
PAC	Política Agraria Común (Common Agricultural Policy)
PES	payment for ecosystem services
PPE	personal protective equipment
PSI	Public Services International
REDD+	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
SLG	Sindicato Labrego Galego—Comisións Labregas (Galician Peasant Union—Peasant Commission)
STEM	science, technology, engineering and mathematics
UBS	Universal Basic Services
UK	United Kingdom
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDRIP	UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
UNESCO	UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNICEF	UN International Children's Emergency Fund
USA	United States of America
WEDO	Women's Environment and Development Organization
WFH	Wages for Housework
WHO	World Health Organization
WWII	World War II

Summary

Aim and Scope of this Report

Just transition is a concept originally promoted by labour and environmental justice organizations in response to the rise of neoliberal processes that were adversely affecting working people and frontline communities in North America, starting during the 1970s. Since the early 2000s, the notion of just transition has been developed by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) as a policy framework aimed at compensating for the job losses associated with the envisioned phasing-out of carbon-intensive industries, including by creating decent and stable jobs in clean energy and infrastructures. As a result of the efforts of labour environmentalists, the concept rose on the climate governance agenda via the Paris Agreement (UNFCCC), the International Labor Organization (ILO), and, later, the European Union.

Currently, just transition strategies and policies tend to focus on formal industrial jobs in the energy, manufacturing and transport sectors. In particular, they tend to pay limited attention to care work and its centrality to satisfying human needs while also reproducing society and protecting the biophysical environment. In general, just transition strategies and policies overlook informal workers, even though they are found in every sector, particularly care work, and which represent "the largest share of the global workforce" (UNRISD 2023). More recently, however, following critiques and pressures from feminist, peasant, Indigenous, environmental and climate justice organizations, awareness of the broader potentialities of the just transition framework for socioecological transformation is growing. **In its expanded version, just transition includes both a concern for decent green jobs and for the conditions that sustain people's lives beyond the job**, including the

household, the community, land, water, forests, and the infrastructures and public services that are essential to human wellbeing. Contributing to this bottom-up process of reframing just transition policies, and reconnecting to its original emancipatory spirit, this report invites us to rethink the just transition framework based on the experiences, perspectives and demands of care workers (both waged and unwaged) and their organizations.[1]

Methodology

This report is policy-oriented and based on the experience, research, and theorizing of participants (care workers, organizers, activists and academics) in the Just Transition and Care (JTC) network. Though it does not include a review of the specialized scientific literature, it speaks to previous policy reports and inquiries on the nexus between care and the planetary crisis.

Coming after four years of collaborative exchanges among JTC network participants, this report is based on an international 'workers' inquiry' process involving actors in different areas of care work, collecting their perspectives on the social and ecological challenges they face and what they see as necessary to tackle them, with particular attention to just transition strategy. The sectors we examined include:

1.) housework and care for people, in both domestic and community spaces;
2.) peasant and Indigenous food provision;
3.) environmental care in community-led conservation and restoration;
4.) healthcare; and
5.) education.

Including both waged and unwaged workers and organizers, this inquiry provides the basis for this report, formed of five distinct chapters, one about each sector examined and also available as stand-alone documents downloadable from the JTC website. Though we are aware that this report does not give a complete account of all forms of care work, we nonetheless consider that these overviews allow us to explore the social and ecological dimensions of care work. The participants' answers to our inquiry demonstrate **how the just transition discourse and policies have left care workers behind, omitting their rights and needs, as well as their life-making, -sustaining and -repairing skills, and their perspectives on the planetary crisis**. Therefore, the primary aim of this report is to advance policy recommendations for a care centred just transition. We hope that different organizations will use the full report and/or any of its chapters to form inclusive alliances between formal and informal, industrial and care workers, from the local to the global scales, to demand a radical shift in both environmental and care policies.

Argument

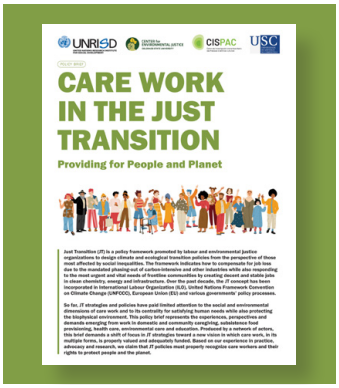
We recognize that care work is relational and involves both care providers and care receivers—which, at some point or another, is all humanity and all of nature. Though our inquiry has focused on care providers and not yet fully explored the perspectives of who/what receives care and how, **what is clear from our research is the failure of market-oriented public policies, to respond to the needs of both carers and the people—and environments—they care for**. We thus call for a decisive turn towards a democratic public sector as the key policy arena for fostering a care-centred just transition. We claim that governments must take direct responsibility for responding to care needs in society, which are associated with the care needs of the biophysical environment.

[1] Throughout this report, we use the term "care workers" to include both waged and unwaged workers, even when not explicitly stated, and encompassing all five dimensions proposed in this report.

We call for the just transition to be about shifting from a care-less to a care-full economic system, expanding human rights towards the inclusion of a right to adequate care, to safety from the risks associated with ongoing environmental changes, particularly climate, and to a healthy environment for working class, peasant and Indigenous populations. This requires a fair allocation of roles, responsibilities and means for caring work, but also acknowledging and rectifying the ecological and climate debt owed by the rich to the poor, including by the global North to the global South. Such a shift is incompatible with neoliberal policies and requires a decisive step away from the capitalist system and culture. Putting caring before profit is essential to achieving the above goals in all sectors of care work, and it is the only way to achieve a care centred just transition.

Resources for this shift should be gathered by redirecting public funding currently going to fossil fuels, monocultures, war and high-impact megaprojects and by introducing progressive taxation and monetary policies, including the abolition of tax havens. We also argue that public management of care provisioning services is more cost-effective than private insurance, and that would ultimately reduce the huge financial burdens carried by individuals seeking private care. Finally, we demand that governments play a key role in this shift by providing adequate funding and creating the space for appropriate political representation and participation of care workers in the design of just transition policies.[2] We understand this political juncture as an unprecedented historic opportunity to re-orient ecological transition policies towards the satisfaction of the largely unmet care needs of both people and the planet.

In short: representing an international network of actors engaged with organizing, advocacy and research, this report claims that, to protect people and the planet, just transition policies must properly include the rights and needs of care workers.



[2] See the policy brief: Care Work in the Just Transition. Providing for People and Planet.

INTRODUCTION

The Centrality of Care Work for a Just Transition

What is a Just Transition?

Just transition started emerging in North America as an explicit trade-union strategy in the 1970s, even though the term was not used until 1995 (Stevis 2023). The motivation for this was a broad concern for social justice issues in the face of the deterioration of the particular arrangement between the state, capital and unions that characterized US, Canadian and European capitalism after WWII. During the 1970s, capital started relocating as well as adopting labour-saving technologies, changes that US and Canadian unions were not able to prevent. At the same time, the social welfare provisions for workers and communities were minimal compared to the European social welfare states. In both contexts, however, significant environmental policies met strong resistance from capital pushing back against any attempt to impose limitations on accumulation. Out of this emerged the "jobs vs. environment" version of occupational blackmail: this consisted of the corporate threat of industrial relocation in response to not only environmental policies but to any kind of ecosocial and community demands, such as higher tax contributions from corporations, or unionization. **Just transition emerged as the democratic socialist response to occupational blackmail and focused on both protections for communities and workers, and green industrial policy.**[3]

Around 1990, the labour movement in industrial economies started paying attention to sustainable development, seeing it as an opportunity for a just green transition—whether using the term or not (Barca 2024). In 1997 international trade union organizations brought the just transition concept to the Kyoto climate negotiations for the first time (Stevis and Felli 2015; Sweeney and Treat 2018). In 2006, the Argentinian government endorsed the concept as part of its negotiation strategy at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). But it was not until the end of the first decade of the millennium that the connection between just transition and decarbonization came to dominate. That was the result of historical circumstances—i.e. the opportunity to bring just transition into global climate

[3] For a compelling discussion that addresses successes and failures of the just transition in the US context see https://www.labor4sustainability.org/just-transition-listening-project/.

negotiations—rather than inherent to trade-union strategy (Rosemberg 2020). In 2010, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) adopted a resolution to combat climate change through sustainable development and just transition. This strategy succeeded in making just transition an accepted concept in global climate governance. The year 2015 was a turning point when the ILO produced its Just Transition Guidelines, and the just transition strategy was mentioned in the Paris Agreement, which advocates for "a just transition of the workforce and the creation of decent work and quality jobs" (UNFCCC 2015:1).

In short: the political influence of the just transition concept has grown rapidly within the last two decades, becoming integrated in programmes and strategies by governments, as well as bilateral and multilateral development agencies. Through this process, **the original broad social justice character has tended to be reduced, becoming increasingly associated with the politics of decarbonization**.

Nevertheless, the past few years have seen new research, policy proposals and initiatives that incorporate additional sectors—including food, biodiversity, health, and education—into the politics of just transition (Stevis, Krause and Morena 2021). By adopting a feminist lens to expand the notion of justice towards eco-social equality (Arora-Jonsson et al 2024; Velicu and Barca 2020; Stevis 2023), this report contributes to the reframing of just transition by focusing on several forms of care work that bridge formal and informal, waged and unwaged labour. We argue that **just transitions require broad and democratic public provisioning and caring systems, centred on universal rights and entitlements, and on a right to co-design just transition policies by the workers themselves**. Our focus on the ecological dimensions of care work is consistent with the ecosocial impetus of just transition from its inception and, in any case, reflects the fact that all social practices are also ecological and all ecological practices are also social.

The care economy, particularly its vast unwaged and unrecognized hinterland, has been overdue for a just transition that will render it a recognized and valuable component of ecosocial welfare systems. In fact, care work highlights the need for a dual set of just transitions (Stevis 2023). First, in response to transitions within each sector. Automation and artificial intelligence, for instance, have profound impacts on healthcare, education, housework and beyond. Second, the historical marginalization of much of care work requires an even move massive just transition to ensure that care workers enjoy decent employment, including labour rights, and a decent income.

What is Care Work?

In the ILO's most recent elaborations (2018; 2024a; 2024b) care work is understood quite broadly, as involving direct and indirect care, paid and unpaid activities, in the education, healthcare, social work and domestic work sectors. The ILO distinguishes between two main types of activities: 1) direct, personal, and relational care—such as feeding a baby or caring for a sick person; and 2) indirect care activities—such as cooking and cleaning. Unpaid care work refers to work provided informally without monetary compensation, while paid care work is performed for financial compensation by a diverse range of workers, including nurses, teachers, doctors, and personal care assistants. Domestic workers are also considered

part of the care workforce (see ILO 2018:2). This definition provides a widely accepted baseline that is sometimes further broadened to include "direct care, indirect care, environmental care, and domestic and communal work that take place in the household or in the wider community" (UN Women 2023a:8; see also MacGregor et al. 2022; Lorek et al. 2023).

Adopting this broader definition, **we consider care work as the ensemble of paid and unpaid activities that produce, sustain and provide for human life and the environment, and care workers (or carers) as all the people providing care, whether paid or unpaid, in formal or informal ways**. Often invisible and unrecognized as work, caring takes place in both the private and the public sphere, in urban and rural environments, on the land and in many earth-systems where people work to meet their own subsistence needs. While in many countries after WWII the state was becoming the main duty bearer for ensuring adequate care, the past few decades have seen a general roll-back of governments' involvement with caring. This is due to structural adjustment and austerity programmes in both the global North and global South and the consequent expansion of care work into other domains, particularly families/households and markets, but, also, community activism and the not-for-profit sector. While the share of paid care work is increasing, the majority of it remains unpaid. In addition, both the public and the for-profit care sectors have shown a strong tendency towards reducing care services to the minimum, expecting ever more of it to be performed for free. Most unpaid care work globally is performed by women, starting with mothers and girls. Moreover, inequalities based on sex, gender, class, ethnicity, ability, immigration status, global North and South, and other factors heavily condition the distribution of, and access to care services, as well as the ways care workers are treated and compensated. This often results in unsustainable burdens and/or life-threatening working conditions.

In-country and global inequalities heavily influence the distribution of care work, access to care services, and the treatment and compensation of care workers. That said, the persistent, even increasing feminization and racialization of care work must be recognized as global tendencies—with migrant people, particularly women, largely filling the demand for roles such as nursing care assistants, nursing aides, home care aides, household and personal services workers, nannies, and domestic workers more broadly in OECD and other high-income countries (King-Dejardin 2019:20). Most of these jobs are considered "low-skilled," which implies they are subject to stricter migration policies than high-skilled jobs (King-Dejardin 2019:21-28). Moreover, these "global care chains" (Hochschild 2000) can be seen as a new form of imperialism, as migrant workers cater to the needs of rich societies by leaving huge care deficits in their countries of origin.

This global picture of the feminization/racialization of caring confirms long-standing feminist analyses of the sexist and racist underpinnings of the devaluation of care work. This structural analysis is the starting point for a strategic reflection on what is needed for truly inclusive just transition policies. In fact, recognizing care work as feminized and racialized, does not simply point to the social identity of most care workers but also to the social devalorization of care work, despite the fact that all people and all nature need and benefit from some kind of care.

In this perspective, caring includes the work of communities, activists, peasants, social movements, Indigenous peoples, and waged workers across various sectors, who provide for the well-being of both people and the environment, despite being unrecognized, undervalued, overburdened, and/or unsupported by public policies.

Furthermore, we acknowledge that care work is not unidirectional but relational: it is based on a relationship between those who care and those who are cared for—both human and nonhuman nature—encapsulating the interdependencies of the human condition (Lynch 2022). This awareness has been clearly voiced by the carers and care worker representatives who have contributed to this report, who have underscored the importance of a just transition that is informed by an ethics of care. Without such a cultural shift, care itself will remain subordinated as a value in society.

The next section will give a brief account of the current debate on the intersection of the climate and care crises, and on the need for a gender-sensitive approach to just transition.

Care Work in the Planetary Crisis

The current era is commonly understood as a conjunction of multiple crises of liveability, intersecting with each other from local to global scales. We see this as only the latest chapter of a longer history of systemic lack of recognition and support for care providers and receivers. In fact, the global care crisis is marked by a stark imbalance "between the need for care and the failure of systems to provide it in fair and ethical ways" (UNRISD 2022:9). According to UN Women (2023), the global care crisis emerged from a convergence of longstanding processes of care devalorization, environmental degradation, insufficient government investment in social protection, escalating costs of living, and debt crises. Both the ecological and care crises, however, impact people unequally, depending on gender, ethnicity, income, ability and other factors of social discrimination. In this perspective, **the just transition strategy must be located at the intersection of these interrelated crises of ecology (climate, biodiversity, pollution) and care, which result in the lack of, or unequal access to adequate provisioning for basic human needs**.

Central to the dynamics of the care crisis is the gendered division of labour, whereby the lion's share of care responsibilities falls on women and girls who "perform three-quarters of unpaid care work, or 76.2 per cent of the total of hours provided" (ILO 2018: xxix). This happens particularly in contexts where public and private care services are inadequate, and among rural women in low-income countries who, tasked with managing household resources and services, bear the brunt of these challenges (MacGregor et al. 2022). According to the ILO (2018), by 2030, the number of care recipients, particularly children and older persons, is expected to reach 2.3 billion. **The vast majority of care needs are met by unpaid carers with estimates suggesting that "16.4 billion hours are spent in unpaid care work every day**. This is equivalent to 2 billion people working 8 hours per day with no remuneration" (ILO 2018:xxix). Moreover, these estimates do not consider food provisioning and environmental care, the most hidden dimensions of care work, where care needs are also likely to increase and grow more difficult to meet due to

climate impacts. Nor do they account for the unpaid work of activists and community members caring for people and the environment in impoverished or marginalized contexts.

The COVID-19 pandemic was simply the latest manifestation of this global crisis of care (Barca 2020; Stevis, Krause and Morena 2021). It has called attention to the many forms of care work (paid and unpaid) that are needed to (re)produce bodies, societies and ecosystems. The transfer of coronavirus from animals to humans (zoonosis) emerged out of a global economic system that treats land and the nonhuman world as economic resources to be exploited, rather than cared for and reproduced. At the same time, the pandemic toll has been gravely worsened by generalized and decades-long processes of contraction of public healthcare and welfare services. Its distribution has followed pre-existing patterns of social inequality, hitting most heavily the people with least access to healthy living conditions. In the lockdown periods during the COVID-19 pandemic, women's unpaid care work in families and communities became a "shock absorber," particularly regarding childcare responsibilities, cleaning and cooking, resulting in an increase in women's reported anxiety, stress and depression (UN Women, 2021), as well as in domestic violence. The gendered division of labour became more pronounced (FADA, 2020), with women and girls bearing the brunt of job losses, particularly those already disadvantaged on the basis of income, age, race, geographic location, migration status, disability, sexual orientation or health status, and especially in the care and service sectors. This disparity was exacerbated by the lack of childcare options, forcing many women to leave their jobs (UN Women, 2021:20). The impact was especially severe in rural areas and low-income communities and countries where even basic infrastructure like water, sanitation, and energy is often inadequate. At the same time, COVID-19 relief measures also reflected structural inequalities, with some groups such as migrant care workers or peasant farmers, being left out entirely.

Global responses to the pandemic, while hugely important, largely overlooked care work and workers. Only 11 percent of the 1,700 social protection and labour market measures worldwide addressed unpaid care work (UN Women 2021:36), with most of these initiatives concentrated in wealthier countries in Europe and North America. **This reflects a broader tendency to undervalue care work or consider unpaid care as economically unproductive, thus ignoring it in national accounting of gross domestic product** (GDP) (MacGregor et al. 2022).

Further amplifying existing inequalities across various axes and exacerbating the vulnerabilities of already marginalized communities, the effects of environmental degradation, aggravated by climate breakdown, disproportionately impact the global South (MacGregor et al. 2022). Women and girls in low-income and rural communities of the global South are disproportionately affected. Consider, for example, how environmental degradation and water stress exacerbated by climate change amplify the burden of provisioning for household needs. As the climate crisis accelerates, we see an increasing and intensifying of "women's and girls' unpaid care, domestic and communal work" (MacGregor et al. 2022:5). Policies aimed at improving environmental sustainability and Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) often fail to consider

the additional labour that climate interventions create, particularly for women, thus inadvertently increasing the burden of unpaid care work (UN Women 2021). Only 11 percent of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement acknowledge the unpaid care work of women and girls, with Cambodia being the sole country proposing measures to alleviate these workloads (UN Women 2023a; 2023b).

As the structural connections between the ecological and care crises are becoming more evident, policy advisers are increasingly emphasizing the need for transformative paradigms and policies that place, "care for people and the planet at the centre of economic recovery and transformation" (UN Women 2021:11; see also Navarra et al. 2023; EEB and WECF 2021), as this would ensure the, "survival and flourishing of life" (Turquet 2023:18), fostering social justice and averting ecological collapse (Lorek et al. 2023). **From a just transition perspective, ecology and care crises intersect and increase the unmet social need for care. Paying greater attention to care jobs is the most obvious response, but these jobs continue to be unacknowledged and not adequately valued. The just transition strategy has the potential to respond to this need** and to rethink, "the kind of economic system we want, and the challenges that we must overcome to make it a reality" (Rodriguez Acha 2016:1). However, trade unions still largely see it as a gender-neutral, rather than gender-transformative framework (Samman 2024). Moreover, strategies for sustainable development often focus on women's economic empowerment, which amounts to bringing women into the formal economy, but without also providing the social infrastructure needed to avoid the double and triple day of work that feminist economists and movements have been criticizing for decades.

The next section addresses the ways that care work has been incorporated in the just transition discourse, followed by an overview of the specific contributions of this report.

Just Transition, Gender, and Care Work

In 2023, the COP28 Presidency launched a "Gender-responsive Just Transitions & Climate Action Partnership," endorsed by 82 countries, committing to, "promote measures to reduce, redistribute and value unpaid care and domestic work, including by promoting the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men within the household" (COP28 2023). This declaration, a clear step forward in the direction of care-sensitive policies, comes from a recent intensive process of brainstorming led by feminist NGOs, UN Women as well as the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and International Labour Organization (ILO), aiming to incorporate care work into the just transition agenda.

Already in 2016, the NGO Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) highlighted how failing to consider intersecting power relations in society and the workplace—including those based on gender, race, ethnicity, class, and age—could undermine the potential for a truly equitable just transition. WEDO also emphasized the imperative for a just transition to take into account women's unpaid care work and informal work, "both of which in essence subsidize our current economic systems and are financially

unrecognized or undervalued" (Rodriguez Acha 2016:2).

While neither the UN-driven Katowice Committee of Experts (KCI) report on implementation of just transition (2022) nor the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report on just transition (Lee and Baumgartner 2022) mentioned care work, UN Women has taken huge steps in the direction of a care-sensitive feminist approach to the just transition, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on this perspective, a gender-just transition is evidenced by: 1.) public investments in the care economy; 2.) the generation of high-quality green jobs for women; 3.) the reduction of women's unpaid care burdens; and 4.) the support of community empowerment and women leadership in policy development and implementation (UN Women 2021) and women workers' representation and participation in just transition decision-making processes (see ITUC 2022). UN Women also calls for the decommodification of care, breaking away from resource extraction and pollution, and unblocking accountability pathways used by, "environmental, Indigenous and feminist activists" to demand action and solutions to the climate crisis and for social justice (Turquet et al. 2023:48). Grounded in a "human rights-based, intersectional approach with social protection and care at the centre," UN Women endorses gender-responsive just transition policies that ensure everyone's access to public services, social protection, and sustainable infrastructures, including care services (2023a:3; see also UN Women 2023b). Additionally, following the ILO's (2018) 5R Framework for Decent Care Work—recognize, reduce, redistribute, reward, and represent care work—the report stresses the need for governments and stakeholders to prioritize the recognition, reduction, and redistribution of unpaid care work while ensuring that paid care work is adequately rewarded and represented within current mitigation and adaptation strategies, including the just transition.

Several policy reports (Buschmann 2022; ITUC, 2022) identify women and girls as strategic agents in a green economy, given that health and care jobs produce significantly fewer greenhouse gases than jobs in other sectors. Women's roles are also highlighted as important in sustainable energy and agroecology and yet, "under-resourced, under-valued and underrecognized" (UN Women 2023a:4). Reframing care jobs as green work, they claim, could attract more men to these sectors and redistribute care work, and investing in care is seen as a recovery plan from the pandemic that could generate 2.7 times more jobs compared to other sectors and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 30 percent (Buschmann 2022:21; see also Diski 2022).

These perspectives and recommendations have been repeated and reinforced in the 2024 UN report on care systems which calls for, "a paradigm shift towards a society that prioritizes the sustainability of life and care for the planet" (2024:7). Efforts to address care inequalities and restructure care systems must: be human rights—based and transformative, demand state accountability and universality, and leave no one behind (UN 2024:8-9).

A similar perspective can be observed in the ILO 5R framework, which has been a baseline for its just transition policies addressing care work, usually under a "gender equality" lens (ILO 2022). Among the most recent ILO publications, it is worth mentioning the ILO Policy Guide on gender equality, just transition, and climate action, which

argues that, "unless unpaid and paid care work are included in NDCs and just transition frameworks and/or strategies, the potential for just transition initiatives to advance gender equality and inclusion would remain limited" (2024a:16). The guide calls for gender-responsive and inclusive policies of transition based on investments, "in public care infrastructure and services," (2024a:viii) and on the recognition of care sectors (education, healthcare, social work and domestic work) as important economic segments that can create alternative and green job opportunities for both women and men, thus promoting sustainable growth.

Further, the 2024 ILO resolution on the care economy sees care as related, "to human, social, economic and environmental well-being, and sustainable development," considering it a driver to, "just transition and social justice," as well as to productivity, business and employment opportunities (2024b:1). The resolution also reinforces the need for, "social co-responsibility," towards a more equal division of care between, "the State, the private sector, families, the social and solidarity economy (SSE) and the community" (ILO 2024b:2), and recognizes the importance of not commodifying care, access to which must be guaranteed for all, and to advance a "rights-based approach to care" (ILO 2024b:4). Additionally, in line with the UN approach, the report emphasizes the role of the state as having a "primary responsibility" for establishing robust care policies, regulatory frameworks, and "systems for decent work and gender equality" (ILO 2024b:5).

Appreciating existing efforts to incorporate care work and gender-responsive and transformative actions in into policies, **we point to the need for firmer commitment towards a justice- and rights-based approach to care, capable of responding to society's care needs**. This commitment must take priority over the insatiable drive for growth—even when presented as productivity and efficiency—which is socially and ecologically damaging. We argue that considering the care economy as a strategic sector for private investments—a tendency still largely adopted in ILO guides and policy recommendations—presents the risk of reaffirming market-centered priorities over the well-being of caregivers and care receivers, therefore reproducing rather than eliminating social exclusion and inequalities. There is, thus, a need to resist mainstream framings of gender in economic policies, as merely an issue of women's access to the job market, without challenging the way in which the market economy is structured around the undervaluation of care (Martínez-Álvarez and Barca 2023). Moreover, **a transformative just transition approach to addressing care inequalities needs to move beyond a gender-framing of care work, i.e. taking care out from under the umbrella of gender and seeing it as a policy sector of general eco-social relevance**. It is also necessary that it addresses all transitions in care, whether caused by climate deterioration or artificial intelligence or skill drain.

Our approach also concurs with the one adopted in MacGregor et al. (2022) in departing from the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), where care is only mentioned within SDG 5 (gender equality), to argue instead that we need a standalone goal for addressing the crisis of care as related to the environmental and climate crisis. From this perspective, this report adopts an expanded notion of care work based on the understanding that the social and environmental dimensions of our political economy/ecology are mutually constituted.

Five Dimensions of Care Work

This report discusses five dimensions of care work that include different forms of social reproduction and provisioning. To do that, **we build upon the experiences, voices and perspectives of caregivers themselves, starting from the most hidden spheres of unwaged or informal caring**, such as domestic and community work, subsistence food provisioning, or environmental care provision, **but also linking them with the perspective of waged/institutionalized work in healthcare and educational systems**.

- *Domestic and community care:* involves direct and indirect care (paid and unpaid) for household members and their living spaces, through activities like nursing, feeding, educating and socializing, cleaning, washing clothes, and collecting water and fuel (housework). Paid housework is almost entirely performed by migrant and/or racialized workers, both in private households and in public or private infrastructures. Unpaid housework in the private sphere is mostly performed by women and girls. To this we add the unpaid housework which is performed in community spaces, mostly by activists, volunteers and community members as a form of collective self-care, responding to the needs that are left unfulfilled by the state. Community housework includes direct care via material and immaterial support (e.g. food banks, legal counselling, medical assistance, free cultural and recreational activities), as well as indirect care, e.g. the reclaiming, repairing, maintaining and self-management of community centres and libraries, urban gardens, repair and thrift shops, or the provision of immaterial/relational resources and communication channels, such as mailing lists and blogs, as well as assemblies and collective decision-making structures. Both domestic and community carers respond to basic human needs, regarding not only individuals but also their relations with others and with their living spaces. Although we are aware of the profound differences among paid and unpaid domestic and community housework, in this report we focus on their similarities as varieties of the 'labour of love' that is necessary for society's reproduction and wellbeing.

- *Subsistence food provisioning:* includes all those productive and reproductive activities that involve the production and gathering of food and its subsequent preparation. It involves immediate engagement with the land and/or other natural resources, i.e. small-scale farming, forestry and fishing, as performed by peasant, fisherfolk and Indigenous populations worldwide. Women and girls play a central role in these activities, as food provisioning and preparation is largely related to domestic work. Food provisioning that takes place outside the realm of agribusiness, is correlated with additional work performed in the restoration, maintenance and protection of soil, water, seeds, and biodiversity, as well as with community organizing for reclaiming and managing land. This work requires the recovering and reproduction of non-industrial and communitarian forms of knowledge, techniques, tools, and management.

- *Environmental care (or earthcare):* involves the work performed in the maintenance, restoration or protection of forests, soil, water and biodiversity in a variety of ecosystems and in different contexts—wild areas, Indigenous territories, natural parks, protected areas, etc. It is very often, and in many cases predominantly performed by Indigenous and rural populations, including riverine, island and ocean communities. Although in most of these cases it is largely unpaid and related to food provisioning and to domestic/community care, there are also cases of remuneration when performed under specific governmental or intergovernmental schemes (e.g. Brazil's *Bolsa Verde* programme). A significant amount of earthcare, however, is taken for granted and not adequately remunerated, as the seasonality of forest/rural firefighters demonstrates. These activities straddle conventional divides between formal and informal caring work.

- *Healthcare:* encompasses all services directed towards the mental and physical well-being of others, performed in households and healthcare facilities, as well as the indirect care work performed in these facilities (e.g. cleaning, waste sorting, maintenance). Healthcare services can be provided in centralized infrastructures (e.g. hospitals) as well as in more decentralized community facilities or in private households. These activities are characterized by different grades of specialization and highly unequal working conditions, risk levels, and wages. Healthcare providers can be public or private enterprises, or a mix of the two, with increasing levels of financialization in many countries. They tend to employ a largely feminine workforce, often composed of migrant workers, mostly concentrated in low-paid and highly vulnerable jobs, although migrants are increasingly found in more specialized jobs. In this report, we focus on healthcare performed outside of the household.

- *Education:* includes teaching activities, from early childhood to university and lifelong learning, as well as the indirect care spent on the maintenance and management of education infrastructures. Teaching is largely performed by women, and characterized by different grades of specialization, working conditions and wages. Much of it is performed in public institutions, although it can also be privatized and/or financialized, and this is increasingly the case. In all instances, it involves constant efforts of interpersonal, cross-generational and cross-cultural communication and relational care. In this report, we focus on education in institutionalized settings, such as public schools and universities.

Since the 1970s, neoliberal policies have stalled and/or derailed the deepening and broadening of the social welfare state and encouraged the increasing commodification and financialization of many forms of caring. Distancing ourselves from this market-driven "care economy" approach, and adopting a feminist intersectional perspective, we strive to recognize and tackle the different dynamics of power and oppression that undervalue caregivers' contributions to society; prevent the proper satisfaction of their needs and respect for their rights; and make their

work more burdensome. Moreover, this approach implies addressing care work not only as a (women's) "burden" to be diminished or eliminated but as a collective necessity fundamental to human and non-human survival and well-being. Importantly, we further assert that **when performed in the proper conditions, adequately recognized and equally distributed, caring is meaningful and rewarding work, with a highly transformative potential**. Consequently, this report is based on the assumption that, to truly achieve a gender-transformative and care-sensitive just transition, policies must go beyond gender mainstreaming to embrace a paradigm shift that places care work at the centre of socioecological transitions. Only by doing so can we address systemic inequalities and harness the full potential of care work in fostering new models for an egalitarian ecosocial political economy/ecology.

As highlighted above, current just transition policies are mostly energy-centred and of limited ambition. This was never the intention of the original proponents of just transition, who were driven by a more comprehensive democratic socialist vision. Yet, currently just transition policy designers do not sufficiently engage with the centrality of waged and unwaged care workers as significant actors in ecosocial transitions.

Some literature has associated just transition for care workers with just energy transitions (e.g., Narayan 2023; Vachon 2024). While climate change and energy transitions will have an impact on care workers, care work and care workers are also affected by transitions that are not related to energy, e.g., due to artificial intelligence. As we noted earlier, there is also a need for a just transition away from the feminization and racialization of care work, towards an expansion of public care provisioning that would benefit all sectors of the labour force. Connecting the just transition strategy to care work addresses not only a very significant part of working people affected by transitions, but also highlights the central role of unwaged workers, largely women, in the production and reproduction of society and nature. Our inquiry represents an attempt to make the voices of all carers heard in what we consider to be the most important ecosocial policy framework of our times.

The Just Transition and Care Network (and Methodology)

Just Transition and Care (JTC) is an international network including union representatives, activists and community organizers involved with domestic and community care, subsistence food provisioning, healthcare, environmental care, and education, as well as researchers from labour, gender, and sustainability studies. Our point of departure was to highlight the relevance of care work in the politics of just transition by developing a methodology that avoided reproducing top-down agendas and dominant assumptions around care work, as well as around the transition itself. Therefore, the network's primary goal was to create a space where representatives of different care sectors (workers, trade-unionists, activists and social movement actors) could discuss their experiences and perspectives on matters of their concern, including the COVID-19 pandemic, climate and environmental change, and social and community needs, with the aim of incorporating these ideas into just transition policy frameworks.

Our initial claim that the just transition framework was ignoring care work was confirmed when we realized that many of the network members—activists and workers engaged in caring for people and the planet daily, both in the global North and South—had never even heard about just transition. At the same time, all contributors agreed that what they do is, in one form or another, care work that is necessary for the wellbeing of people and the planet even though it is quite often unrecognized and unpaid.

This report elaborates upon a series of five online meetings convened by the JTC network between June 2021 and June 2023, with the aim of exploring different aspects of the nexus between care and ecological crises, as well as care and post-carbon transition policies, from the perspective of (paid and unpaid) care workers, with academics contributing as facilitators and active listeners. Each meeting featured between three and four representatives of different care-work sectors (see five sectors outlined above), who were invited to answer previously circulated questions regarding their experience with the COVID-19 crisis and the ecological/climate crises, as well as their perspective on government and union policies in their lines of work. Upon previous agreement by all participants, the webinars were recorded and later transcribed. Language interpretation between English, Spanish and Portuguese was provided as needed, and speakers received a small honorarium to compensate for their time. The proceedings were shared with an international scientific board of academics, specializing in each of the five care sectors, who were convened to discuss them in light of their respective expertise.

The first outcome of this participatory process was a policy brief (in English, Spanish, and Portuguese) (Barca et al. 2024), which elaborated policy recommendations agreed upon with all participants. It was co-authored by the JTC coordinating team, peer-reviewed by the JTC academic advisers, and launched at the European Society for Ecological Economics (ESEE) Degrowth International Conference in Pontevedra in June 2024. On this occasion, representatives of each sector were invited to share their perspectives, adding new insights that were incorporated into the final analysis.

The transcriptions of all webinars and the Pontevedra seminars were then cross-analyzed alongside grey literature on each of the five dimensions of care work, generating the first draft of this report. This draft served as the foundation for multiple online discussion sessions and collaborative writing efforts among the coordination team of the JTC network, which spanned nearly eight months. This process culminated in a full draft of the report that underwent an additional peer review by the international scientific board.

This process has been incredibly fruitful, but we also acknowledge the limitations of this report. It does not claim to provide an exhaustive overview of contemporary care work worldwide and it focuses on care providers, but not care receivers. The following chapters in this report offer detailed descriptions of how participants in the JTC network analyzed the interconnected crises of COVID-19, ecology and inequality in their respective fields (domestic and community care; subsistence food provisioning; environmental care; healthcare; and education). It offers **an important look at what transition policies care workers are envisioning as appropriate and necessary**.

CHAPTER 1

A Just Transition for Domestic and Community Care

Chapter Summary

This chapter in the Just Transition and Care Work report focuses on the role of domestic and community care work in just transition strategies.

Considering *housework* as a set of tasks, performed in both domestic and community caring, that are key to social and ecological wellbeing, this brief has been built on testimonies from four representatives of domestic and community carers working in Italy, Peru, the UK, and at the international level, integrated by a desk review of recent reports on care work in the planetary crisis.

Our main policy recommendations related to domestic and community care are as follows:

- Grant a living income/wage, as well as benefits and labour rights (e.g. healthcare, paid holidays, pensions, and collective bargaining), to family carers and other unpaid care workers of any gender, starting with mothers in low-income and rural households, so that all care needs are properly met, the care burden is more equally distributed, and carers' needs are fulfilled while they provide for the needs of others.
- Grant full equality of rights to domestic workers (for example, a written contract, living wage, stability, social security, occupational safety, and protection from violence, abuse and deprivation), starting with the right to form unions and to collective bargaining. Provide them with access to adequate and affordable transport, healthcare and educational services, free childcare, and eldercare services.
- Recognize community care activism and activities developed in self-managed spaces and the urban commons, including when resulting from the occupation and restoration of abandoned infrastructures. Recognize the right to community self-care, support and enhance community capacity to respond to unmet needs, and provide for social well-being and cultural revitalization in marginalized areas.

Authors
Stefania Barca, Eleonora Gea Piccardi

Reviewer
Sherilyn MacGregor

Contributors
Selma James and Nina López (Global Women's Strike), Leddy Mozombite (Federación trabajadores y trabajadoras del hogar, Perú), Roberto Sciarelli (Rete Beni Comuni, Italy)

The Housework Perspective

This report reflects on the place of domestic and community caring in just transition strategies. The rationale for addressing them together comes from assuming the housework perspective, broadly intended as **the ensemble of direct and indirect care that responds to the most immediate needs of human life**. While acknowledging that housework is a contested term in feminist theory and movements, we find it useful to describe the similarity of many tasks between domestic and community caring, and to identify a specific area of care work—that of providing for the daily immediate needs of people in their own households and/or communal spaces. Moving beyond traditional understandings of housework normalized as women's duties performed in the private sphere, we understand it as implying three interconnected types of caring, performed in both private and community spaces: 1.) caring for the well-being of living beings—individuals, as well as domestic animals and plants; 2.) caring for the physical spaces which host, shelter and sustain individuals and collectives (be they homes or communal spaces); and 3.) caring for human relations/emotional wellbeing in both intimate and social contexts. **While housework has long been associated with the private and domestic sphere, we understand community caring as its extension outside the home**. By community caring we thus mean the unpaid housework which is performed in community spaces, mostly by community members, as a form of collective self-care, responding to the needs that are left unfulfilled by the state, allowing them to partially alleviate and redistribute the burden of domestic care.

Summing up, we see housework as a diffused undertaking that involves three types of relations: family (unwaged work performed in own households, for oneself and others), community (unwaged work performed in communal spaces), and wage relations (paid work performed outside one's own household).

In all its forms and relations, **housework is necessary work that cannot be eliminated without serious repercussions upon human survival and wellbeing; at the same time, it is the most unappreciated of all forms of caring, due to its cultural association with the female gender and with class and racial discrimination**. Not only is domestic care universally associated with women and girls, often unpaid or underpaid, and legally discriminated against (e.g. informally hired migrant care workers or hired under legal conditions that constrain them and make them vulnerable), but even community care, when gender norms and sexism remain unquestioned, tends to reproduce the gendered division of labour, with the feminization of housework and masculinization of political work and leadership. Broadly speaking, gender equality policies aim at liberating women and girls from their socially constructed relegation to housework via education opportunities and a larger inclusion within labour markets. However, while equal opportunities are necessary and respond to basic human rights, experience shows that the inclusion of women in the formal labour market does not in itself contribute to a more equal distribution of housework among genders—especially across class and racial divides (Olcott, 2025; Szalai, 1975). Instead, it often contributes to what is known as women's "second shift" or "double workday" (ILO 2018:39-40).

Since housework is necessary work, so long as it remains socially unappreciated and taken for granted, it will continue to be shifted onto women and girls, and on people of all genders from low-income, rural and racialized groups. This is why we claim that **alleviating the burden of housework, and creating the conditions for its equitable distribution, implies appreciating its relevance for society, and allocating the appropriate amount of public money to it, equating it to other public service sectors**.

In what follows, we discuss how linking domestic and community care work to the just transition can be an historical opportunity for: 1.) valuing and financially supporting housework so it can also be more equally distributed in society; 2.) ensuring that everyone gets access to care in and out of their home; and 3.) reducing carbon emissions and environmental degradation. Our starting point is that all types of housework are vital to the ecological transition. Although different forms of housework are performed by the same people in different situations, its specificities become clearer when analyzing it separately.

Unpaid Domestic Work: the Care Income Perspective

According to Selma James and Nina López, coordinators of the Global Women's Strike (GWS), and one of the leading figures of care activism worldwide, unpaid housework must be remunerated by the state (not the market), because this is the only way to de-naturalize it and acknowledge its necessary character and its vital contribution to social (and ecological) reproduction. "Care politics is about abolishing the gender division of work and building a caring society where everyone cares and is cared for," claims Selma James, who is especially known for being a founder of the Wages for Housework (WFH) campaign in the early 1970s, now carried out by the Global Women's Strike movement. For over 50 years, the WFH/GWS movement has campaigned for accounting for housework in national economic statistics, and for a proper remuneration of the people who perform it in various forms.

A very important point in the WFH campaign has been that of elevating the social perception of domestic carers, starting with mothers, as workers. Standing on equal footing with other categories of workers means that they can also liberate themselves from oppressive and diminishing representations (as unproductive, impoverished and economically dependent subjects), reclaim the social value of their work, and organize collectively for their rights to financial and other support. Building upon that perspective, and in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the GWS has recently made connections between housework and environmental / climate justice. "In the 21st century we must form a movement to say that life matters—and women know better because we have been the life-makers all along," James explains.

In 2020, during the first lockdown of the COVID-19 pandemic, the GWS launched an international campaign demanding a "care income" for people and planet, to elevate the status of care work (in homes, communities or on the land) as what contributes most directly to social and ecological wellbeing, and thus the status of carers as (potential) key subjects in the just transition. The Care Income Now! campaign demands a guaranteed and publicly funded income for unwaged carers in recognition of their key contribution to

social and ecological wellbeing. In this way, unwaged reproductive work done in homes and communities, with regard to people and/or the environment (e.g. urban farming,[4] waste reduction and recycling, the defence and reclamation of green areas or urban beaches) would start to be equal (at least nominally) to waged 'productive' work done in energy, transport, manufacturing etc.

In James' words: **"A care income establishes the social value of care and the fact that society backs you as a carer."** While housework certainly is work, says López, it is not a job like any other. It is a relationship between the person who does the caring and the person who depends on that care. If it were paid according to its value to society's survival and well-being, it would not be regarded as a burden but as necessary, valuable, and skilled work, and the status of those who do it would increase accordingly, making it much more likely for men to be interested in doing it.

Based on its five decades-long experience with unpaid housework and with the struggles of low-income working-class women, including women of colour and immigrant women, the GWS sees the care income as a powerful measure to 1.) combat women's and other carers' poverty by putting money directly in their pockets as compensation for the important contribution they already give to society—rather than forcing them to seek jobs (often more housework/care work, this time low paid) that would put a double work burden on their shoulders, and jeopardize their ability to take care of their dependents; 2.) counter domestic violence by enabling women to leave abusive partners while acquiring the ability to support themselves and their children; 3.) provide the conditions for a more equal distribution of care work among genders and at home; and 4.) reduce people's dependence on jobs that increase carbon emissions and ecological degradation.

The care income idea had emerged shortly before the COVID-19 pandemic as part of a collaboration among climate justice, degrowth and feminist activists and scholars working together for a radicalization of the just transition in Europe (Adler et al. 2019). In the spring of 2020, the proposal was also endorsed by the Feminisms and Degrowth Alliance (FADA 2020). Two approaches were coexisting within it: one that saw it as an unconditional cash transfer (a sort of basic guaranteed income) and one that saw it as a conditional transfer made to unpaid carers for the appropriation of their working time past and present, leading to their impoverishment and social subordination (Barca et al. 2020; see also Martí Comas, 2024). Promoting the second perspective, **the GWS sees the care income as a recognition of how much society owes unpaid carers for what they do to keep people and places alive and healthy**. An international survey conducted in 2022-23 showed that 72 percent of primary carers only worked outside the home because they needed the money and 84 percent of them were in favour of a care income (Global Women's Strike 2024). Interviewees, including non-biological parents and community carers, highlighted how a care income would show them that their work is socially valued and allow everyone to choose how much caring work they wanted to carry out and/or receive in their own homes.

[4] The Care Income Now! campaign includes non-industrial subsistence food providers in both the urban and the rural world. For a more detailed view on subsistence farming in rural areas see chapter 2 of this report.

Box 1. Wages for Housework and Global Women's Strike

The Wages for Housework (WFH) campaign, founded by Selma James in 1972 in England, advocates for the financial recognition of the social and biological work of reproduction and caring. The campaign addresses various sources of power inequality, including sexism, racism, poverty, deportation, criminalization, militarism, rape, environmental destruction, and violence and discrimination against women and children and other genders. Over the years, WFH has grown through the efforts of its diverse members, including autonomous organizations of women of colour, queer women, sex workers, single mothers, women with disabilities, as well as men who also recognize the value of caregiving and have embraced the perspective of the WFH/GWS.

Among its significant actions, the WFH campaign launched the Global Women's Strike in 2000 and the Care Income Now! campaign in 2021, which connects care for people and the planet. Today, WFH boasts an international network spanning Canada, France, Germany, Guyana, India, Ireland, Italy, Peru, Spain, Thailand, Trinidad & Tobago, Uganda, as well as the UK and the US.

The main goals of the Global Women's Strike include advocating for the payment of care work, whether with money or other resources; securing greater investments in welfare by reducing military expenses; achieving wage equity for women and men globally; providing financial support, benefits, and breaks for maternity and breastfeeding; abolishing Third World debt (the global South is owed!); improving access to clean water, decent housing, healthcare, public transportation, and education; reducing working hours through technological advancements that do not pollute or destroy the environment; ensuring protection against violence and persecution, with asylum where necessary; promoting freedom of travel and movement; and supporting agroecology that regenerates the soil and helps deal with climate change.

Of course, part of social reproduction already is publicly funded—e.g. in public schools, hospitals etc. The care income would extend this funding to the invisible but huge amount of unpaid care work that also forms the basis of the economy. If publicly guaranteed, and measured (concretely) against individual carers' needs, rather than (abstractly) against their time engagement, this **compensation does not equal commodification**. Although unpaid housework continues to be a feminized job worldwide, the care income is not directed to women exclusively, but to carers of all genders, particularly those who find themselves impoverished and overburdened with care responsibilities.

While the International Labour Organization's (ILO) 5R framework (2022) only mentions 'reward' in relation to 'paid care,' and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2019) does not recommend conditional cash transfers that target women due to the risk of reinforcing gender roles, the care income is meant as a conditional cash transfer aimed to reward unpaid carers of any sex/gender identification. It replaces the logic that, 'caring is a necessary but an unproductive burden for society' with one of, 'caring is essential, high-value and empowering work, with a larger potential for social development than many other sectors of waged

employment.' It replaces the logic of, 'any employment is better than no employment' with one of, 'caring work is more sustainable and more needed than many jobs on the market.' It replaces the logic of, 'transfer cash to women so they can become economically active' with one of 'transfer cash to carers because we owe them, so they can work less and in better conditions.' In short, **the care income is a 'payment for caring services' from states to carers of any sex/gender, in the household as well as in the community, in recognition of their high-value contribution to society and the environment**.

The care income should not replace other investments in reducing and redistributing care work. We must reject the logic of 'scarce resources' when it comes to care. As war economies, pandemics and other catastrophes have amply demonstrated, governments have the political capacity to create money to respond to emergencies. Moreover, if caring is a universal human right, as UN Women (2022) acknowledges, how to give/receive it must be a choice made from personal considerations, not as a result of poverty or wealth.

In short, the current care crisis must be seen as not only a global emergency but as the outcome of an enormous historical injustice related to the social appropriation of unpaid working time from both unpaid and low-paid carers in all societies. We claim it is high time for money to be made available for caring, expanding the rights, benefits and freedom of both carers and the people they care for.

Paid Domestic Work

Caring relationships are shaped by not only sex/gender, but also by class, citizenship/immigration status, and racial differentiations—all of which intersect in labour markets which structurally undervalue care workers. Domestic workers represent the most unrecognized, undervalued and taken for granted sector of paid care work in all societies. There are 75 million domestic workers employed by households worldwide, with women making up three quarters of this workforce (ILO 2021). While including the same tasks as unpaid domestic care, paid domestic work differs substantially from it in terms of labour relations, because it is organized through a contract (formal or informal) between those who provide it and those who receive it. The wage relation determines the conditions of work for domestic carers, and their relationship with the cared for; the labour market for domestic workers, however, is profoundly shaped by intersectional inequalities and by cultural factors. Social research has shown that **domestic workers are among the most exploited and discriminated against in the world, both historically and at present** (Valenzuela 2024). These workers "experience some of the worst working conditions across the care workforce and are particularly vulnerable to exploitation. Jobs in this sector are notoriously unpredictable and casual in nature and are adversely affected by low labour and social protection coverage. Moreover, violence at work is ubiquitous in the domestic work sector" (ILO 2018:xxxix).

The International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF) has conducted surveys with member-based organizations at the national level, revealing the widespread violence and harassment that domestic workers face from their employers, other members of their employers' households, employment intermediaries, or members of their own families or households (UN Women 2021).

This situation reflects the fact that **housework is generally categorized as unskilled and unproductive, and especially identified with women of colour, Indigenous women or immigrant women** (from other countries or coming from the countryside to the city). Domestic workers, however, raise children, sustain the elderly and people with disabilities, feed people and keep their houses in order, and even care for their pets. In short, they do the very important things that make everyday life possible and better for the professional classes, allowing them to pursue their careers. However, the domestic workers who make all this possible are discriminated against, not because their work is not important, but because of institutionalized sexism, racism and classism. As a consequence, they respond to other people's needs much at the expense of their own and their families' needs. This is because in the majority of countries care work is highly privatized and individualized, while public services are largely inadequate to meet the needs of low-income people. The truly unacceptable paradox of care work is that those who do it for others have little time or money to do it for themselves and the people who depend on them. At the same time, income inequalities are such that often domestic workers cannot afford proper housing and basic infrastructures (ILO 2018). The problems that affect domestic workers are aggravated by the weak protection they receive on the part of labour organizations and labour law.

According to Leddy Mozombite from the Domestic Workers' Federation of Peru (FENTTRAHOP), Peruvian domestic workers need legal protection from violence and abuse in the workplace. Legal agreements, when they exist, are not in the first languages of domestic workers, who are often migrants or members of Indigenous communities. She notes how the COVID-19 pandemic laid bare the precarity and lack of rights of domestic workers in her country, who were already vulnerable because of conditions of, "isolation, informality, [and] lack of consideration on the part of union confederations." She also reminds us that **most domestic workers are themselves mothers and carers in their own families and communities, doing the double or triple shift to support them**. Thus, she adds, they would benefit from a care income that compensates them for the unpaid care work they do in their homes and communities, and this would increase their choices and their power to refuse the lowest wages if they go out to work.

Box 2. Domestic Workers' Federation of Peru (FENTTRAHOP)

The Domestic Workers' Federation is a nationally and internationally recognized union fighting for economic, social, political and cultural rights of domestic workers in Peru with a class and gender focus. It has carried out multiple campaigns against discrimination and violence towards domestic workers in the workplace, for guaranteeing their rights of a safe and healthy work environment in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, and for their social protection and union rights as workers. Building on the ILO Convention 189, passed in 2011, in 2020 the Federation won an historic battle in Peru, leading to the approval of the Law 31047, which promotes equality and security for domestic workers and the eradication of their economic discrimination at the national level.

Like any other job, paid domestic work also has an environmental dimension, which is rarely considered by research

and in public opinion. **Domestic workers are responsible for handling food, waste, appliances, and chemicals, so their work is both affected by and relevant to environmental regulations**. When compared to most industrial, infrastructure and commercial jobs, domestic work is relatively low-carbon, i.e. it contributes to human well-being while having a comparatively lower impact on the biosphere. This, however, is only a very general claim, which needs to be specified further. On the one hand, domestic workers are exposed to the hazards of their work environment and working conditions, such as dangerous cleaning chemicals, fire and other domestic incidents, ergonomic risk, and others. Depending on the place, and conditions in which work is performed, they may also experience fatigue, lack of training, or underestimation of health and safety risk, all of which affect domestic workers like anyone else. On the other hand, **climate change and worsening environmental conditions make their work harder and riskier**. For example, domestic workers often commute long hours to and from work and are affected by deteriorating weather and environmental conditions, especially in the low income, low resourced areas where they often live. According to Mozombite, domestic workers are particularly affected by hazardous chemicals and temperature shifts, as well as by traffic pollution, to which they are exposed without proper recognition and protection.

At the same time, domestic workers are often members of so-called "frontline communities," i.e. rural, Indigenous people, people of colour and migrants, whose territories are most affected by environmental degradation and extraction. As environmental justice research has amply demonstrated, "pollution—linked to land and water degradation, ecosystem and biodiversity destruction and climate change—is the largest environmental driver of disease and premature death, disproportionately affecting the poor, women and children in low- and middle-income countries and minorities and marginalized populations everywhere" (UN Women 2021:51; see also, Icahn School of Public Medicine at Mount Sinai et al. 2017). Women in these communities are the most vulnerable, but also active in combating environmental injustice. For example, Mozombite mentions the struggles of women in the Arequipa and Cajamarca communities against mining and other hazardous activities, which cause health damage particularly related to mercury pollution, and especially affecting children. She argues, **"Our environmental struggle is one with our labor struggle: we demand respect not only for domestic work but for our communities and territories."** From this perspective, respect for domestic workers implies not only respect for their rights in the workplace, but addressing the inequalities that make them vulnerable in the first place. This starts with paying attention to the needs and rights of those populations which inhabit the margins of the urban/industrial economy and are among the most exposed to its hazards, as well as catering to their care needs (specifically, via housework).

Adopting this perspective would allow for a substantial overhaul of dominant views about the environmental impact of households and their potential contribution to sustainability, thus inspiring public policies that encourage sustainable consumption. It is a common assumption that households above a certain income level have the potential to contribute substantially to lowering resource consumption (of fuel, food, water,

etc.) and the production of waste. Feminist research, however, has shown that this potential is not correlated with individual 'preferences,' but, more concretely, with domestic work: generally speaking, consuming less and better implies working more and harder (Farbotko 2018). This is why **making households greener starts with investing in housework. If adequately compensated, protected and trained, domestic workers could make a true difference in a healthier and safer relationship between households and the environment**. This, in turn, would raise their status in society and strengthen their communities' ability to challenge social and environmental inequalities.

Community Care

In low-income groups and impoverished communities that cannot afford to pay for care, and especially in the absence of adequate care policies, care needs can be partly attended to by community-based organizations acting on a volunteer basis. This form of care work has been recognized by the ILO, which refers to "community care" as a subset of unpaid work and of volunteer care work, distinguishing it from "unpaid direct volunteering for other households" (ILO 2018:9; see also MacGregor et al. 2022). This work is often conducted in very precarious and resource-poor conditions and in a dialectical relationship with the state, compensating for inadequate provisioning due to budgetary or other kinds of restrictions, e.g. the exclusion of non-citizens (The Care Collective 2020).

According to Roberto Sciarelli, from the Commons Network (Rete dei Beni Comuni) of Naples, Italy, community care constitutes an intermediate level, between the domestic and the public sphere, often not captured by research and social policy. Always present at the micro-level, subaltern social groups activate practices of community care more powerfully in times of crisis, as a way to guarantee their means of social reproduction. Sciarelli recalls how, for example, the urban commoning movement of Southern Europe (and especially in Greece, Italy, and Spain) emerged in the wake of the financial crisis of 2008. This crisis hit low-income populations particularly hard because of a reduction of care services and infrastructures, as well as the worsening of environmental hazards due to a new wave of extractive projects. In response to this dual challenge, community activists occupied abandoned and degraded urban spaces, repairing and transforming them into places of care and self-care for impoverished communities. **"Care activism" and "community care" have thus taken centre stage, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic**, when, according to Sciarelli, urban commoners acquired a clear sense of their work as care and began reflecting on the best ways to organize such work. In this period, they also increased activism aimed at achieving legal recognition of community care and commoning practices.

In many contexts, community-based organizations, often led by women, "stepped in to fill the gaps [of scarce state provisions], coordinating food aid and the supply of personal protective equipment (PPE), organizing collective childcare, distributing reproductive health and hygiene kits, and providing psychosocial support for survivors of violence" (UN Women 2021:10). In other words, the pandemic acted as a magnifier of the structural failure of care services, policies and infrastructures within the neoliberal system, and the normalization of care work as an infinitely available service provided for free by carers (largely

women) in all societies. Going back to normality, these movements claimed, was not a desirable option. What was needed, it became clear, was systemic change that put care at the center of public policies (FADA 2020).

Despite responding to unmet human needs, too often community activists face the threat of eviction from the urban commons, so their first political demand is the official recognition of the right to reclaim, use and self-govern communal spaces. In some cases, commoners have also tried to access public funding, participating in public-commons partnerships which can provide financial support for community care. Such innovative projects have also had the effect of democratizing the management of welfare provisions and should be supported by public authorities. Moreover, recognizing the relevance of community care for a just transition would also imply allocating proper funding to the necessary maintenance and reparation of community infrastructures, e.g. via retrofitting or energy efficiency, so that they can adequately shelter the people that inhabit them (in most cases, self-managed urban commons lack heating, adequate sanitation, etc.). With respect to these issues, it is always crucial that institutions do not give recognition and support to commoning experiences depending on the economic value they could produce, whether in terms of profit or savings for public welfare. **The value produced within the commons, in fact, should be considered a form of "civic income," not measurable in mere economic terms, but composed of the different kinds of material, cultural, and relational goods they provide**.

In Italy, says Sciarelli, the urban commoning movements have not been involved so far in just transition policies because of their top-down institutional approach, which until now did not take community care into account. Nevertheless, he thinks that **including community care in just transition initiatives would be an important way of recognizing its potential for grassroots capacity-building and resilience in times of crisis**. Indeed, community care enables people not only to withstand financial crises, but also to find refuge and support during public health emergencies such as heat waves, floods, fires, earthquakes. It is, thus, highly social relevant in times of climate and ecological breakdown. At the same time, he argues, looking at the municipal movement could be a unique opportunity for just transition policymakers to learn from and interact with municipalist political practices, and their achievements in promoting communitarian forms of caring, seeing it as a vital intermediate sphere between the private and the public, and a radically democratic complement to state provisioning.

Box 3. The Commons Network of Naples

The Rete dei Beni Comuni (Commons Network) of Naples, Italy, consists of several structures self-governed by "communities of inhabitants," dedicated to experimentation with mutualist practices, alternative economies, and independent cultural production. Each of these commoning experiences originated from acts of occupation of public buildings by the city's social and environmental movements since the 2010s. They occupied these buildings to reverse privatization processes, reclaim abandoned or underused spaces, and establish areas of direct democracy and socio-environmental care. The self-government of the commons is now enabled by the institution of, "urban civic uses," a legal tool that recognizes the right of the "community of inhabitants," to govern the commons they reclaimed and take care of them in complete autonomy from private interests and external political influences.

The urban commons are much-needed spaces of resistance to the structural carelessness of neoliberal societies. Community caring should be seen as a type of (self)love and solidarity labour that allows, "alternative forms of economic and social organization that stand outside the capitalist nexus," (Lynch 2022:31) to emerge and flourish. Such spaces are testaments to the existence of diffused social dissent from the neoliberal values of individualism, competition and productivity. Going beyond and more in-depth than solidarity work or charity, **the care commons allow for the development of trust relationships among the people involved in them—be they activists, squatters, or users—who tend to form a "community of inhabitants," i.e. a non-blood-based type of family governed by relationships of (self) caring and interdependency**.

While commoning practices certainly allow for a reduction and redistribution of care work, breaking the isolation and overburdening of women in the household, experience has shown that, like other forms of love labour and family relationships, community caring is also ridden with power asymmetries and latent conflict. Just like family carers, community carers enjoy the sense of purpose and emotional fulfillment that comes with the labour of love, but also many of its dark sides such as lack of appreciation, emotional and physical fatigue, postponement of personal achievements, or lack of boundaries. Although withdrawal from this form of care work is easier than it is in family/household contexts, it is also morally (self)sanctioned—even though not legally—because community caring often involves vulnerable or dependent others, or fragile infrastructures and relationships, thus implying a strong sense of personal responsibility.

In short, **like other forms of care work, community caring is necessary work for social reproduction, which provides for essential human needs while being taken for granted**. Just like domestic work, it tends to have no clear limits, rights, or protection for the carers. Consequently, like other forms of caring, community care also needs recognition, reduction, redistribution, rewarding and representation.

Towards a Just Transition for Domestic and Community Care

According to all contributors to this report working in the domestic and community care sectors, for a just transition to be effective, both paid and unpaid housework need to be recognized and supported by public policies and adequate funding. While Universal Basic Services[5] are a crucial and necessary demand from radical care politics, providing for care cannot stop at centralized provisioning, and the notion of 'public service' needs to expand towards including the work carried out in homes by family carers and in communities, so people have choices about the care they give and receive and are not forced into exploitative or institutionalized care.

Recognizing various forms of housework as part of the just transition would strengthen demands for their proper compensation, which would be instrumental to redistributing care burdens. Thus, a living income must be made available to all carers who do not have access to it. For domestic carers this would help put stronger limits to their exploitation and double burdens, while for community carers it would provide infrastructures, formalize the collective use and self-

[5] The Universal Basic Services (UBS) concept refers to policy proposals calling for governments to guarantee that everyone has access to free and good quality life essentials—from childcare and healthcare to housing, energy and transport—with "built-in sustainability, devolved powers, a mixed economy of providers bound by public interest obligations, and fair pay and conditions for service workers" (Coote 2023: 3).

government of the commons, and protect activists from burnout and self-exploitation. Compensating unpaid caregiving would also reduce the total amount of hours spent in paid work, which constitutes a primary cause of CO2 emissions and other environmental impacts. Further, this would allow for the unionization of housework, so that it can be an integral part of the mass workers' movement which needs to lead the just transition.

In addition, **financial compensation and training must be provided for people to reduce the carbon footprint and environmental hazards in their own homes, the homes where they work, or in communal spaces**, e.g. via retrofitting, or devising and practicing sustainable forms of housekeeping. The rationale for this demand is to make sure that the environmental benefits of domestic work do not come at the expense of an additional burden for domestic workers and carers. At the same time, a substantial reduction of domestic work associated with reducing the ecological footprint could be achieved if governments took responsibility for ensuring that household products and appliances can be used with minimal environmental impact.

The just transition should also include substantial public funding for the urban commons, so that they become permanently available, while maintaining their grassroots and self-organized character. This would turn cities into spaces which are livable for all, by ensuring that buildings, parks, and infrastructures are renewed and managed minimizing their environmental impact and in the interest of those who live there—including experiments of co-housing (Tummers and McGregor 2019); that individual consumption and waste are substantially reduced and circular economies are autonomously created; and that green space is expanded in the place of new constructions.

To conclude, through both paid and unpaid housework in homes and in communities, an enormous amount of work is spent on daily reproductive activities that guarantee the well-being of people and territories, compensating for the lack of adequate public services and the exhausting effects of capitalist production. From an (eco)feminist just transition perspective, this work should be properly counted and recognized as emission-reducing and life-enhancing, thus forming an integral part of the just transition strategy.

CHAPTER 2

A Just Transition in Food Provisioning

Chapter Summary

This chapter focuses on the role of peasant and Indigenous food production in just transition strategies.

Considering non-industrial food provisioning as a critical dimension of care work, this work is based on testimonies from four representatives of peasant and Indigenous farming systems in Brazil, Chile, and Spain, complemented by a desk review of recent reports on food production in the planetary crisis.

Our main policy recommendations on food provisioning are as follows:

- Recognize natural farming/ agroecology and food security and sovereignty as key components of just transition and grant them proper valuation by reversing priorities in current agricultural policies, in order to shift support from corporate farming to peasant, Indigenous and urban farming.
- Recognize Indigenous territories as key sites of agri-food transitions, and respect, recover and support their collective farming expertise, practices and techniques.
- Sustain life in rural areas by securing access to land, providing public services and sustainable transport infrastructures, and granting a living income to non-industrial farmers, fishers and local food producers.
- Ensure access to healthy food from peasant and Indigenous farming systems to low-income populations, especially in urban areas.

Authors
Eleonora Gea Piccardi, Stefania Barca

Reviewer
Seema Arora Johnson

Contributors
Maria Ferreiro and Isabel Villalba (Sindicato Labrego Galego, Spain), Camilo Santana (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra, Brazil), Sandra Trafilaf (Mapuche writer and activist, Chile).

Food Provisioning in the Planetary Crisis

In the last decade, Indigenous and peasant movements, as well as eco-feminist movements and academics from different disciplines have pointed to the **interconnections among food provisioning, care for people and care for the planet** (Curran-Howes and McCune 2024; Via Campesina 2023; Harcourt et al. 2023; FAO 2021). This is also evident considering the climate crises, rising food insecurity, and growing inequalities that plague the global food system today—as highlighted by the Just Rural Transition Initiative's (JRT) recent report, "Principles for Just Food System Transitions" (Atteridge 2023). Agriculture is simultaneously a significant driver of environmental degradation and a victim of its effects. On one hand, agri-food systems, particularly agroindustry, account for one-third of anthropogenic greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions—around 16 billion tons of CO2 in 2020, marking a nine percent increase since 2000 (Turquet et al. 2023; see also Atteridge 2023). Industrial food production also fuels habitat and biodiversity loss, consumes 70 percent of freshwater, contributes substantially to soil degradation, and exacerbates extreme weather events, all of which severely impact agricultural and aquacultural yields (FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO 2023). On the other hand, food production is highly susceptible to climate change, as rising temperatures, altered rainfall patterns, extreme weather events, and new pests and diseases exert immense pressure on agricultural systems and workers.

A recent UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) study (2023) estimates that global crop and livestock losses due to extreme weather events between 1991 and 2021 add up to 3.8 billion USD, or five percent of global agricultural gross domestic product (GDP), and nearly 300 million tons annually. The 2023 State of Food Security report by FAO, the UN International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), and other agencies paints a concerning picture of global hunger rates that continue to rise (FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO 2023). In 2022, 9.2 percent of the world's population faced hunger, affecting approximately 691 to 783 million people. This marks a notable increase from 7.9 percent in 2019 (FAO 2023a). Additionally, around 29.6 percent of the global population—or 2.4 billion people—experienced moderate to severe food insecurity, with 900 million enduring severe food insecurity.

Climate crisis and food insecurity particularly impact agricultural workers, an astonishing 94 percent of which are informally employed (Atteridge 2023:8). Small-scale farmers in rural areas largely excluded from formal value chains are particularly vulnerable to the loss of agricultural lands and natural resources. While poverty among small-scale and family farmers is also widespread in wealthier nations, where market prices often fail to cover their costs and labour adequately (Atteridge 2023:3), the majority of the world's poor and food-insecure populations reside in low-income rural regions of the global South. In those areas people tend to rely heavily on agriculture for their livelihoods and are highly dependent on natural resources, and thus are especially vulnerable to climate change and environmental degradation. Vulnerabilities to food insecurity are also an urban phenomenon. Many low-income urban areas are poorly serviced and access to fresh fruit and vegetables is primarily mediated by large food retailers, many of whom import food

stuffs from far away. During moments of climate disaster, long supply chains are more likely to be disrupted than locally cultivated products.

Indigenous peoples are often among the most vulnerable groups. **Indigenous livelihoods are under immense pressure as drastic climatic shifts disrupt natural cycles, seasons, and ecosystems**. In the Arctic for instance, where approximately 10 percent of the region's four million inhabitants are Indigenous (Arctic Council n.d.), climate change is profoundly altering icepack conditions, foraging options, and herding activities that are central to their livelihoods. In other regions, water scarcity is intensified by the drying up of ponds, lakes, and aquifers, and the dwindling of stocks of marine fish. These challenges are compounded by land grabbing, tenure insecurity, and restricted access to forests, pastures, and wild edibles due to conservation laws, national parks, and the activities of logging and safari companies (FAO and Alliance of Biodiversity International and CIAT 2023). Even though Indigenous peoples manage 65 percent of land under customary tenure globally, only 18 percent of this land is formally recognized by governments, leaving communities vulnerable to displacement (Corriveau-Bourque 2021:12). This erosion of land rights is accompanied by increased migration to urban centers and a growing dependency on commercialized economies, further marginalizing traditional food practices and knowledges, which are disappearing at an alarming rate. The transformation of Indigenous diets is another critical concern. Environmental degradation, the reduced availability of wild foods, and the gradual abandonment of traditional dietary practices have led to a growing reliance on imported, highly processed foods. This shift has contributed to a rise in noncommunicable diseases and deteriorating health outcomes. Simultaneously, the increased use of agrochemicals and the introduction of new crops as part of colonization and assimilation efforts are undermining the sustainability and cultural integrity of Indigenous food systems (FAO and Alliance of Biodiversity International and CIAT 2023:10).

The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted the essential, yet precarious roles of food workers, including small-scale producers, migrant and seasonal workers, and local food vendors. These groups suffered severe livelihood disruptions, "paying the price for a global food system that for decades has hedged its bets on the expansion of industrial farming methods and international trade" (UN WOMEN 2021:24). Indigenous peoples faced even greater obstacles in accessing food during COVID-19 lockdowns. The loss of their traditional livelihoods, which are frequently tied to land, left many Indigenous communities—especially those engaged in traditional occupations, subsistence practices, or informal economies—struggling to adapt to the pandemic's impacts. Indigenous women, who often play a central role in ensuring food and nutrition for their families, were particularly hard-hit, as their responsibilities and vulnerabilities were further exacerbated.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also widened the gender gap in food insecurity, from 1.7 percentage points in 2019 to 4.3 percentage points in 2021 (FAO 2023b:xxiii). Women were more impacted by job and income losses and took on greater unpaid caregiving responsibilities. This trend was particularly notable in rural areas, due to higher rates of job and income losses in agri-food systems. Both in the global North and

the global South, women often lack secure land rights and face greater food insecurity—particularly in poor and landless households. Their unpaid reproductive labour at home, as well as their contributions to farm work, have tended to be ignored by policy makers (Arora-Jonsson & Leder 2021). While gender inequality and power dynamics in farming and food provisioning remain major obstacles to a just food and rural transition, dominant gender mainstreaming approaches have often failed to address them effectively. Rather than challenging deep-rooted patriarchal structural inequalities—such as disparities in land ownership—these approaches have treated the integration of women into (far from equitable) markets as the primary solution, often increasing women's already heavy labour burdens and introducing new inequities in rural areas (Arora-Jonsson & Leder 2021).

Despite these adversities, **family farmers and communities, including Indigenous people, are crucial to global food production and security** (Ortiz-Miranda et al. 2022), contributing around 80 percent of the world's food in value terms, with farms smaller than two hectares producing about 35 percent (FAO 2023). In the global South, smallholders manage an estimated 500 million farms, supporting nearly two billion people (Atteridge 2023:8). Within this context, women's contributions to agriculture are vital. **Women make up 40 percent of the agricultural workforce and produce one-third of the world's food, primarily in small-scale farming** where they are predominantly responsible for unpaid food provisioning and preparation in the household (Buschmann 2022; Turquet et al. 2023). Listening to Indigenous peoples is particularly important in order to feed the world sustainably (FAO and Alliance of Biodiversity International and CIAT 2021:10). Indigenous peoples' food systems are holistic and multifunctional, providing food, medicine, shelter, energy, and supporting cultural, social, and spiritual practices (FAO and Alliance of Biodiversity International and CIAT 2021:11). Their focus on the interconnectedness of ecosystems and their ability to preserve 80 percent of the planet's remaining biodiversity (Sobrevilla 2008) are among their many significant contributions to global sustainability. Indigenous food production guarantees a high level of self-sufficiency: in the eight Indigenous communities analyzed by FAO and others, the level of food provisioning ranges from 55 to about 80 percent (FAO and Alliance of Biodiversity International and CIAT 2023:22). These systems rely on traditional knowledge and livelihood practices, including gathering, hunting, fishing, small-scale farming, and shifting cultivation—activities that depend on collective rights and access to communal resources such as lakes, land, forests, and seas. Addressing land and natural resource access and promoting Indigenous food sovereignty are therefore interconnected and essential for ensuring a just transition to sustainable food systems (Corriveau-Bourque 2021:29).

Building upon the experience and visions of peasant and Indigenous farming systems, and of the women within them, agroecology offers a systematic response to the planetary crisis. The FAO (2023), for example, has stated that when based on gender-responsive policies ensuring equitable access to resources and fair distribution of labour, agroecology offers potential benefits for increasing farmers' incomes, improving food security, and enhancing biodiversity. Agroecology, "a science, a movement, and a practice" (Wezel et al 2009), has also recently been endorsed as a solution to the

effects of the ecological multi-crises of food security as well as food sovereignty at the national level (for example in Spain, see Di Donato et al. 2024).

The View from Peasant and Indigenous Farming

Just Transition and Care Network participants from the food sector agree that, to address the existing crises and inequalities in the food system, it has become crucial to recognize peasant, Indigenous, and subsistence farm work as a specific form of care work. Social movements are leading the way in this direction. For Camilo Santana, from the Brazilian Landless Workers Movement (MST), the climate crisis is part of a broader environmental crisis, which in turn is a dimension of the structural crisis of the capitalist system that tends to degrade both the soil and the worker. He mentions that over the past five years, recurrent droughts and sandstorms have significantly affected the farmers working on MST-occupied lands. Since 2000, says Santana, the MST has endorsed agroecology, which it sees as care work with the capacity for "making healthy food accessible to the poor." Driven by MST's women, he explains, agroecology has become fundamental to developing a just transition that breaks with the logic of commodification and individualism, as it is rooted in collective peasant practices based on the dialectical relationship of caring for both humans and nature. He recalls how the COVID-19 lockdown interrupted not only the food provisioning work of peasant farmers, but also the political work of the MST movement, seriously affecting the most vulnerable communities in rural areas. The movement had to stop land occupations and struggles for/against agrarian reform, or continue with limited activity, relying on a few individuals in highly vulnerable conditions, often without the usual support from the wider movement. Rural women, Santana adds, paid a disproportionate price in the lockdown, facing increased workloads and a rise in domestic violence.

Box 4. Movimento dos trabalhadores rurais sem terra (MST), Brazil

The Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (Landless Workers' Movement) (MST) is a major social movement in Brazil, founded in 1984, advocating for land reform and social justice. With approximately 1.5 million members across 24 of Brazil's 26 states, the MST focuses on securing land for poor rural workers through occupations of unproductive land, promoting sustainable livelihoods and addressing broader social issues like income inequality, racism, and sexism.

The MST's initiatives are rooted in anti-capitalist principles and emphasize agroecology, food sovereignty, and the defense of the environment. The movement supports women's and LGBTQIA+ rights, aiming for equal participation within its structure. In addition to land access, the MST organizes cooperative agricultural production, and is the largest producer of organic rice in Brazil. The movement also prioritizes education, public health, and literacy for rural workers.

The MST's actions are based on the belief that land must fulfil a social function, as stated in the 1988 Brazilian Constitution. The movement has gained recognition for its direct action tactics and received the Right Livelihood Award in 1991. Influenced by liberation theology and Paulo Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed, the MST promotes grassroots democracy and has built solidarity with global organizations advocating for similar causes. In line with its internationalist approach, it is part of the transnational peasant movement, La Via Campesina.

According to Maria Ferreiro, from the Women's Secretariat of the Sidicato Labrego Galego (SLG), "care work is everything we do to make life possible, what sustains life," so food provisioning is obviously part of it. However, she notes that **the main challenge is how to value such work within a system where "development" coincides with its devaluation**. She highlights how during the pandemic people realized the need to prioritize the production of life over capitalist commodification: "It became very evident that healthy food is not just a basic need, but a human right, and that we needed to fight for food sovereignty." Public health policies, she reminds us, went in the opposite direction: closing open-air farmers markets and forbidding peasants from accessing their lands. This disregard for peasant farming during the lockdown goes hand in hand with a long-term disregard for life in rural areas, evidenced by the lack of public transport and reduced access to public services, which undermine the survival and thriving of peasant farming everywhere.

The long-term disregard for peasant farming can also be seen as a consequence of its cultural association with women's work. The task of food provisioning has traditionally been carried out by women and oriented towards life-making rather than profit-making, thus excluded from dominant conceptions of value. According to SLG Secretary General Isabel Villalba, this association becomes clearer when considering the invisibility of women's work within agriculture and their underrepresentation in governance bodies, on land titles and in funding schemes. Much of food provisioning work is practically undistinguishable from domestic and community caring in rural areas, and women continue to be in charge of it. We therefore argue that the discrediting and **devaluation for care work contributes to the discrediting and devaluation of peasant farming** more broadly. This, in turn, negatively affects generational renewal in peasant farming.

As Villalba notes, peasant farming represents 75 percent of the world's agricultural work units, and yet, government policies completely overlook them, directing funding instead to specialized agribusiness. This trend is undermining the possibility of an ecological transition in agriculture. Such a transition, she emphasizes, must be accompanied by the proper recognition of care work and its protection through adequate labour rights—extending this recognition to include agroecological production as a form of care work. Villalba explains that progress has been made towards such recognition in Spain through the creation of safe spaces for women's mobilization within the peasant movement and the establishment of strong alliances with women's organizations more broadly.

As a social movement union, SLG is engaged not only in representing peasant farmers but also in protecting land and ecosystems against the impact of mining, industrial development and other infrastructures which, as Villalba reminds us, are considered more valuable than peasant farming and are prioritized by government policies. This is true for energy transition policies, as about 60 percent of Galicia's territory has been recently identified as rich in certain rare earth minerals of "priority importance," and wind farms have rapidly expanded by dispossessing rural populations. From this perspective, it becomes clear that limiting transition policies to the industrial sector will not bring about a just and effective ecological transition. This is why SLG demands that food

provisioning be treated as a key sector in the just transition. In order to ensure a sustainable balance among competing land uses, **food provisioning must be seen as a form of caring for both human and environmental health**, and industrial activities should be weighed against the socioecological value of agroecological food provisioning (see also the chapter on environmental care).

Box 5. Sindicato Labrego Galego—Comisións Labregas (SLG), Spain

The Sindicato Labrego Galego —Comisións Labregas (Galician Peasant Union—Peasant Commission) (SLG) is a union representing peasant farmers and ranchers. Founded clandestinely in 1973 as Comisións Labregas under Franco's regime, it merged various local committees to advocate for the rights of peasants. The union promotes Galician nationalism, left-wing principles, cooperativism, mutual aid, food sovereignty, feminism, environmentalism, and self-management. Some of the first struggles it engaged in included reclaiming traditional communal lands and opposing dam constructions that threatened local communities.

After legalization in 1977, SLG became known for significant protests, such as those against land expropriations by Fenosa and the proposed nuclear plant in Xove. These efforts marked crucial victories for Galician peasant movements. Throughout the 1980s and beyond, SLG opposed policies detrimental to Galician agriculture, such as the Common Agricultural Policy's milk quotas. The union continued to work towards greater independence, joining La Via Campesina and supporting agroecology and alter-globalization efforts. SLG has remained active in various local struggles, including successful protests against a proposed gold mine in Coristanco in 2013.

For Sandra Trafilaf, a Mapuche writer and activist from Chile, the Mapuche's long-term efforts at recovering food autonomy through self-provisioning and communitarian decision-making are a type of care work, as is the work Indigenous peoples do to preserve their worldviews and techniques of food production, exchanging knowledge and seeds with peasant communities around them. She recalls how one-third of Chilean territories lack access to water, and suffer from desertification, droughts, and soil erosion due to mining and governmental agroforestry policies. For the past three decades, she claims, the Mapuche people have been resisting agroforestry and pro-mining policies by reclaiming commons and practicing self-provisioning, all while being subject to state repression. Subverting the unsustainable capitalist form of food production means, for Trafilaf, "To **return to ancestral practices that for centuries saw this earth, this mother, as a whole**, with us as part of that whole." Indigenous people's work, she claims, is doing the care work of preserving sustainable forms of food provisioning, which are essential to preserving life on earth. "What we are really doing is defending life", she concludes.

Both peasant and Indigenous knowledges can play crucial roles in empowerment, serving as valuable sources of expertise that aid in transitioning to more resilient food systems (Corriveau-Bourque 2021). Villalba, from SLG, for example, suggests that recovering traditional farming knowledge and techniques is necessary and vital in Europe, where agricultural innovation has been geared towards profit and accumulation, disregarding the consequences for human and nonhuman health and wellbeing, as well as for the biophysical environment. She explains that, according to the European Green

Deal's Farm to Fork strategy, the goal is to have 25 percent of agricultural land in Galicia dedicated to organic farming by 2030. However, she notes, only four percent has been achieved because the regional government has not allocated enough funding to support small-scale farmers who are practicing organic agriculture.

Box 6. The "Mapuche conflict"

Wallmapu, the ancestral land of the Mapuche people, once stretched across central Chile and Argentina—from the Limarí River to Chiloé in the west, and from Buenos Aires to Patagonia in the east. In modern Chile, this territory encompasses the Macrozona Sur (Biobío, Araucanía, Los Ríos, and Los Lagos), a region long affected by the "Mapuche conflict"—Indigenous communities resisting corporate and state encroachment on lands taken from them over centuries (see Jullian 2013; UNPO 2009).

Following independence, Chile and Argentina dismantled Mapuche autonomy, reducing their territory to just a few hundred hectares. Today, their resistance aims to reclaim cultural, territorial and economic rights, rooted in a profound connection to Mother Earth (Mapuche means "people of the land"). They see industrial exploitation as violating sacred forests and rivers—fundamentally opposing Chile's extractive economy.

Persistent land disputes trigger violence, and are met with heavy-handed state repression. Since 2022, Araucanía and Biobío have been subjected to an "emergency exception" decre that militarizes the region with army support for police. At its heart, the conflict pits Mapuche communities against logging, energy and mining industries. Their socio-ecological struggle has dual aims: decolonization through land restitution and replacing extractive development with sustainable alternatives that care both for community needs and the territory itself (Santaguida 2024).

Towards a Just Transition in Food Provisioning

In short, from the perspective of peasant and Indigenous food provisioning, the just transition takes on a specific meaning: **to recover and value modes of food production that exist outside of (and resist) agribusiness models**. This applies not only to farming techniques but also to labour relations (horizontal vs. vertical) and to relationships with the land and nonhuman life (caring vs. extractive). This is a key message for just transition actors at all levels (unions and social movements, political parties, governments and intergovernmental agencies): it means that the post-carbon/ecological transition in agriculture must not coincide with high-tech and capital-intensive investments, but should be led by the peasant and Indigenous modes of production that are already practiced at the margins of the agro-industrial system. It means acknowledging their relevance for sustainability and social justice.

According to representatives of peasant farming, agroecology, and Indigenous food provisioning sectors, **a just transition must recognize and support small-scale farming, agroecology, and Indigenous food sovereignty through public policies and funding**. Public institutions, especially in the case of Indigenous peoples, should address only those needs that cannot be met autonomously by the communities themselves. They should invert the logic of commodification by revaluing life-sustaining rural work, making healthy food accessible to everyone, providing essential services like transport and healthcare, and protecting small-scale farmers from the pressures of industrial agriculture. Just transition policies should be grounded in an expanded notion of development that includes peasant and Indigenous ancestral knowledge and considers the earth as a living entity to be cared for. Additionally, recognizing Indigenous knowledge around food and self-provisioning would enhance sustainability, formalize communal self-governance, and valorize Indigenous contributions to global food sovereignty.

CHAPTER 3

A Just Transition in Environmental Care

Authors
Rocío Hiraldo, Eleonora Gea Piccardi, Stefania Barca

Reviewer
Lara Domínguez

Contributors
Edel Moraes (Environment and Climate Change Ministry, Brazil), Eunice Chepkemoi (Ogiek People's Development Programme, Kenya), Natalia Cassau de la Vega (Professional Union of Forest Fighters, Spain), Estéfany Grajales (United Communities Foundation of Colombia, Colombia)

Chapter summary

This chapter focuses on the role of environmental care in just transition strategies.

Considering environmental protection as one very important dimension of care work, this report builds on testimonies from four representatives of community agroforestry, fire prevention and non-extractive development in Kenya, Brazil, Colombia and Spain, combined with a desk review of recent reports on environmental care in the planetary crisis.

Our main policy recommendations on environmental care are as follows:

- Invest in year-round prevention of forest fires, banning of illegal activities, landslides and other environmental hazards in mountain areas, by granting adequately funded, permanent and safe jobs to firefighters; eliminate once and for all temporary/seasonal hiring practices in environmental care, and include it as a key element of just transition policies; grant workers proper representation and access to decision-making in environmental protection policies.
- Abandon exclusionary wilderness protection approaches once and for all and recover and support community-based agroforestry practices and sustainable forest uses (e.g. shepherding and resining) to prevent rural abandonment, the accumulation of fire-prone biomass, and land degradation; recognize and support local organizations engaged in territorial care and promote their active inclusion in territorial management; create attractive job opportunities for rural youth in environmental care services.
- Recognize Indigenous and other traditional populations as guardians of nature at the state level, and implement measures that grant them full territorial rights, effective decision-making and funding for environmental care; protect environmental carers from violence, prevent the exploitation and extraction of their knowledge and services, and value their work by providing them equal access to services and technologies and a basic income.
- Recognize the unequal burden of care work on rural and Indigenous women, promote gender education and provide concrete means to redistribute the care burden in these populations.
- Abandon extractivist development models once and for all, and invest in food and energy sovereignty via community-centred fossil-free and non-exploitative economies; invest in community-led restoration of environmental damage from fossil infrastructures and territorial de-contamination, which is the necessary premise for developing regenerative economies.

Environmental Care in the Planetary Crisis

Biodiversity conservation approaches advocated by governments and conservation NGOs in the global North have focused on the need to prevent humans from using the ecosystems that are to be protected, often by means of creating strongly protected areas and, more broadly, exclusionary conservation rules (Brockington et al. 2008). This approach, also known as fortress conservation, has been critiqued for its inadequacy in protecting both, ecosystems and people (Kashwan 2017; Pemunta 2013). Moreover, various studies have shown that biodiversity conservation has resulted mostly from the labour of peasants, gatherers and other small-scale producers whose subsistence relies on the maintenance of healthy ecosystems (Barca 2012; Martínez-Alier 2002). Such labour involves subsistence-oriented production and petty commodity production in agriculture, livestock, collection of firewood and non-timber forest products, as well as fishing and shellfish collection. We call this environmental care work, or earthcare.

JTC network members highlight the connection between subsistence work and environmental care, discussing the obstacles they face and the positive elements that sustain their earthcare labour. Edel Moraes, a member of the traditional extractive community of the São João Agro-extractive Settlement Project in Curralinho (Pará, Brazil), highlights the role of Afrodescendent, Indigenous and traditional rural communities in protecting a variety of ecosystems in Brazil:

> We are foragers, we are shellfish collectors, we are fisherfolk, we are those who keep nature alive, and when you ask me how does my work relate to earthcare here, I say it is my life that relates to it and not just my work, because I'm from the Amazon, I'm from the forest, along with my family, so for us, earthcare means taking care of ourselves.

This quote emphasizes the indivisibility of earthcare from subsistence food provisioning labour, and the importance of conceiving of environmental care without excluding peasants from the ecosystems to be protected. In her current role as the National Secretary of Traditional Peoples and Rural and Community Development, nominated by Brazil's Minister of the Environment, Marina Silva, Moraes recalls the historical role of "extractive communities", whose central struggle has been to take care of the environment while performing small-scale sustainable gathering of non-timber-forest-products, such as rubber tapping:

> For the last 20 years, I have been part of a social movement that was founded by Chico Mendes in the Amazon, [a movement that] fights for collective territories for land access. And this title to the land gives these other extractive populations the right to live on the land, guaranteeing their ancestry, guaranteeing their traditional way of living, living together in the territory, and in defense of the whole environment, because we are not 'part of the environment', we are the environment.

Box 7. Chico Mendes Memorial (Amazon, Brazil)

The Chico Mendes Memorial was created in 1996 by the Conselho Nacional das Populações Extrativistas (or National Council of Extractive Populations) (CNS). The CNS emerged from the struggle against land dispossession and forest devastation, led by rural workers' unions, especially in Xapuri. Originally called the National Council of Rubber Tappers, it changed its name in 2009 to encompass a broader representation of Amazonian extractivists. The Chico Mendes Memorial aims to promote Mendes' ideas and struggle both nationally and internationally, in addition to supporting agro-extractive communities. It works to defend the environment and promote sustainable development. Its actions include strengthening the organization of forest peoples, implementing local demonstration projects, and influencing regional and national public policies.

Eunice Chepkemoi, programme coordinator in charge of issues related to gender and youth at the Indigenous people's organization, Ogiek People's Development Programme (OPDP), holds a very similar vision of earthcare labour. Her organization focuses on the preservation of the Mau Forest in Kenya, protecting it from illegal activities, rehabilitating depleted areas, and supporting organized groups within the community to carry out income-generating activities that are nature-based, such as beekeeping and the establishment of tree nurseries. Other activities include the development of cultural centres to facilitate intergenerational knowledge transfer on various community issues. The cultural centre serves as a learning facility for understanding the Ogiek history, culture and its traditions as means to preserve and conserve biodiversity. Women compose songs that convey lessons about the protection of nature and young artists are also doing the same. Chepkemoi describes the role of the Ogiek Indigenous community in protecting the Mau Forest, which they inhabit, highlighting how environmental care is central to them: "Traditionally, we are hunters and gatherers who depend on the forest resources for our livelihoods, as we consider it our food and medicine basket. Destroying the forest is against community norms and values. It interferes with our way of living".

Box 8. Ogiek People's Development Programme

Ogiek People's Development Programme (OPDP) is a Kenya based human rights organization founded in 1999 and registered in 2001, dedicated to promoting, protecting and defending Indigenous peoples' rights. OPDP's work is centred on promoting the recognition and identity of Ogiek culture, participation and inclusion of the community in all sectors of development, championing land rights, ensuring environmental protection, and working for sustainable development. OPDP was formed by Ogiek elders, thought leaders and professionals after long standing historical injustices that deprived the Ogiek community of their land and rights as Kenyan citizens.

As scholars of the "environmentalism of the poor" have amply demonstrated, **rural people, especially, but not only in the global South, have been defending biodiversity, water, and soil integrity against harmful developmental projects for decades, often paying the price with their own lives**. In 2022 alone, 401 human rights defenders were killed, predominantly

in Latin America, nearly half of whom were advocating for recognition of Indigenous peoples' rights, and/or land and environmental rights. Among them, 22 percent were Indigenous and 17 percent were women (Front Line Defenders 2023). Environmental carers' rights and working conditions are often poorly recognized by governments and even society, and also hindered in many ways. Due to the nature of their work, they often become targets by opposing forces who seek to discourage, discredit and disrupt their efforts. For example, as Chepkemoi reminds us: "Despite Indigenous peoples being custodians of the environment and ecosystems, their rights to land and housing are unrecognized. They face the negative impacts of conservation programmes, which often have been based on the concept of protecting natural resources and biological diversity, while excluding communities from these areas." In line with various studies illustrating the negative impacts and violence of fortress conservation on forest-dependent people (Bocarejo and Ojeda 2016; Domínguez and Luoma 2021; Duffy 2016; Duffy et al. 2019; Hiraldo 2018, 2021; Kashwan et al. 2021; Lele et al. 2010), she highlights the recurrence of land grabbing, repression and lack of free, prior and informed consent in the context of conservation:

> The Ogiek have suffered frequent evictions by government in the name of conservation interventions in their territories about which they are not even consulted. As such, it has often resulted in gross violations of our rights, in particular to our rights to land and territories. This includes forced displacement and evictions from our territories; criminalization and destruction of livelihoods; loss of rights to lands and resources and sacred sites; harassment of environmental human rights defenders who speak out on behalf of their own Indigenous communities. Many indigenous persons have been dispossessed and displaced from their territories.

Similarly, Moraes denounces the violence endured by environmental carers in Brazil, especially women, who represent most of the victims murdered for protecting the land and nature. She highlights the simultaneous dismantling of environmental protections and the continuous attacks on Indigenous and forest peoples' rights under Bolsonaro's administration as a major challenge for the movement. She argues that these policies threaten the nature and climate defence work performed by Indigenous people and "local" or "traditional" communities in the Amazon forests, including herself, representing the third generation of environmental defenders—including fruit and nut foragers, shellfish collectors, and fisherfolk—whose identity and survival are intrinsically tied to the forest and the rivers.

Environmental care is work performed by not only forest and Indigenous communities, but also by rural communities in different parts of the world, many of whom also face systematic violence and dispossession. Estéfany Grajales, Legal Representative of the United Communities Foundation of Colombia (COUNCO), explains that that large-scale extractivism and the cultural and political economy associated with it pose key challenges for environmental carers in Colombia. She notes that, "the country's significant economic dependence on oil," fosters an, "extractivist culture," that mischaracterizes anti-extractivism as anti-development rather than a defense of life. She also questions the role of extractivism in development, recalling that rural populations affected by

this exploitation of natural resources still lack access to public health services, education, universities and roads. She highlights the challenges around community mobilization for environmental care in the face of long-term violence associated with hydrocarbon extraction. Drawing on her experience working with communities in Puerto Boyacá, a territory enduring 73 years of oil extraction and fracking, she highlights the positive role of external actors in developing awareness and supporting rural communities in their self-organization around environmental and climate justice: "communities that are in shock do not move towards knowing their territory, towards exploring issues of human rights, of intergenerational rights because all this violence slowed them down in terms of awareness, [so] awareness-raising has been our main work."

Box 9. The United Communities Foundation of Colombia (COUNCO)

COUNCO is a non-profit foundation dedicated to protecting human rights and conserving natural resources in Colombia and abroad. Its mission includes the restoration of natural parks and the implementation of educational and business programmes that improve communities and promote social and environmental responsibility. COUNCO has helped rural communities organize in the context of ongoing hydrocarbon development through research and knowledge exchange among women affected by mineral extraction and the creation of a Buen Vivir women's school focusing on water conservation. The organization's work involves awareness-raising, access to information and research, community organizing and political positioning about hydrocarbon exploitation in affected communities.

Wage labourers such as forest firefighters may also play a crucial role in environmental care[6] and in developing community awareness around locally managed environmental conservation. In Spain, for example, the work of forest firefighters varies depending on the season: as Natalia Cassau, a fire truck driver affiliated with the Professional Union of Forest Firefighters (FIRET), explains, during the winter their work consists of rigorous forest cleaning efforts to prevent or minimize the damage caused by potential summer fires. During the summer, when forest fires become a pressing threat, forest firefighters are on the front lines, carrying out all necessary extinguishing operations. Their preparedness extends beyond fire management: they are also trained to handle emergencies in rural areas, maintain trails, review water points, and respond to inclement winter weather and other contingencies. Working predominantly in semiwild areas, often in the mountains, Cassau and her colleagues' work entails close interaction with nature. Their efforts contribute to the wellbeing of rural populations and the enhancement of the local circular economy. As she puts it: "[We] help raise awareness among the local population around the importance of caring for the land. We are committed to the natural environment and want to protect it. Most of us have chosen this profession in order to take care of nature, prevent it from burning, and preserve biodiversity as much as possible."

Cassau's situation shows how the lack of recognition for the labour of environmental carers is also expressed as poor labour conditions of waged workers in this area. She highlights the various problems Spanish firefighters face in doing their work: job insecurity, the seasonality of the job despite the need to work in the

[6] Given this study's perspective of care work as beneficial to both people and non-human nature, waged labourers enforcing fortress conservation (ex. anti-poaching rangers, Natural Parks officers and security company employees guarding protected areas) are left outside the scope of this study. In contrast, firefighters are a key example of waged labour performing environmental care that is beneficial for humans and non-human nature.

forest year-round; highly variable salaries dependent on local finances. Additionally, the seasonality of the job poses challenges, as the work is often concentrated within a short period. This limited time frame reflects a broader issue: politicians and society at large often perceive forest fires as specific, short-term emergencies rather than recognizing them as a growing global problem exacerbated by climate change.

Box 10. Professional Union of Forest Firefighters (Spain)

The Sindicato Profesional de Bomberos Forestales (Professional Union of Forest Firefighters) (FIRET). FIRET is a newly established independent union dedicated to unifying workers. Comprised of forest firefighters in the private sector, they provide a vital public service to the Community of Madrid. Their primary focus is on preventive management of forests, and extinguishing forest fires. After enduring many years of challenging employment conditions at the company contracted to provide forest fire prevention and extinguishing services in the western zone of the Community of Madrid, the firefighters have united to combat the precariousness and injustice they faced. This independent union is distinctive in that union activities are carried out directly by the members themselves, ensuring that their collective voice is heard and their rights are defended.

Poor working conditions in waged labour associated with earthcare are not exclusive to firefighters. For example, existing research also shows low wages, unpaid work and dangerous working conditions for people planting trees in mangrove reforestation projects under payment for ecosystem service schemes (PES) (Hiraldo 2017; Neimark et al. 2020).

Gender-related obstacles to environmental care further complicate this kind of labour. Cassau criticizes paternalistic behaviors among male firefighters, who assume women need protection and are unfit for physically demanding tasks, as well as the underrepresentation of women in forestry technician roles, brigade management, and other positions of responsibility. Moraes notes that, while caregiving is shared in 'extractivist' communities, women often bear a disproportionate burden. She also highlights the higher mortality rate among women land defenders and environmental carers compared to men in the same positions, which led the movement to adopt a 50 percent representation quota for women by statute. Moreover, existing policy reports show that many climate change mitigation and adaptation projects, including **reforestation, land rehabilitation, and waste management, rely heavily on women's unpaid labour**. These projects not only reinforce gender stereotypes by assigning environmental care responsibilities to women and girls but can also increase their unpaid domestic workloads. Women's significant dependence on agriculture, fisheries, and forests for subsistence or employment, combined with their primary responsibility for household food, water, and fuel provision, exacerbates their workloads and heightens their risks of poverty and hunger in the face of climate change, as they have fewer resources to mitigate these impacts (UN Women 2021:10).

The Role of Governments in a Just Transition for Environmental Care Workers

In light of these considerations, we emphasize the critical need for governments to take a serious approach to a just transition for environmental carers. Cassau believes that governments should prioritize funding local-level projects that actively involve rural populations in conserving and preserving their environment. By promoting the local and circular economy through the creation of decent jobs related to forest management, these initiatives can effectively respond to climate change, adapt to changes in forest masses, and manage the increasing amount of fuel accumulating in the mountains due to the abandonment of traditional practices and wilderness protection policies, which have turned forests into veritable powder kegs. She offers several practical examples to illustrate her point. For instance, establishing vegetable composting plants that utilize a mix of 60 percent green waste and 40 percent manure can produce high-quality compost to nourish the soil in orchards and gardens. Additionally, biomass can be transformed into electrical energy or heat, providing sustainable energy solutions. Reviving traditional professions such as shepherding and resin extraction is another effective strategy. Shepherds and their flocks play a crucial role in caring for the environment and preventing fires; their grazing activities help conserve forests and keep roads clear. Cassau also highlights that 70 percent of forest property in Spain is privately owned, primarily by smallholders. She therefore advocates for governmental financial support to these small owners for carrying out essential forestry work in their land.

JTC network members also concur that governmental policies should involve adequately remunerating environmental care. Chepkemoi suggests: given that Indigenous people are strongly affected by climate change due to their interconnection with nature, governments should allocate adequate resources to ensure their participation in mitigation and adaptation strategies, such as engaging in tree planting efforts and other nature-based initiatives. Moraes mentions the revival of Brazil's Bolsa Verde programme, a green grant for environmental caregivers who volunteer to preserve the forest. This governmental programme represents a form of payment for ecosystem services (PES), a key mitigation strategy under the Paris Agreement of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC, 2015), and included in REDD+ projects (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation, plus enhancing forest carbon stocks in developing countries). In addition, the Bolsa Verde programme stands out as an example of a just transition policy that includes environmental carers. Initially implemented during Dilma Rousseff's presidency to target populations in environmental conservation areas and reduce extreme poverty, this programme, Moraes explains, resulted from long-standing demands and struggles by social movements to be compensated for their environmental services. It addressed Indigenous peoples' and local communities' needs for recognition of their invaluable contributions. Moreover, the Chico Mendes Memorial advocates supplementing Bolsa Verde with technical assistance, promoting public policies, and enhancing environmental education, integrating policies across all 16 ministries to comprehensively protect the environment.

While some elements of these schemes indicate a promising way of recognizing and remunerating often unpaid earthcare labour, existing research also suggest the need for caution in contexts where rural populations have little or no power in decision-making about them. Various studies have found not only poor working conditions and inadequate remuneration in forestry-related PES projects, but also land use changes and conservation measures that restrict local communities' access to forests essential for their livelihoods, thereby disrupting household, community, and environmental activities, and exacerbating gender-based inequalities (Beymer Farris and Basset 2012; Bird 2020; Lund et al. 2017; MacGregor et al. 2022:55-60). This is related to a political economy in which decisions about PES schemes are monopolized by the actors providing the payments and controlling project money (often foreign governments, private companies and NGOs acting in collusion with central governments). Set up this way, foreign governments, conservation NGOs and carbon credit buyers in the global North can influence everyday decisions and forest resource access in the global South, thus reproducing old colonial patterns (Cabello et al. 2012; Collins 2019; MacGregor et al. 2022; Tienhaara 2010).

A way out of this dilemma might be found in a non-for-profit and more holistic approach to PES, centred on the human, territorial, and political rights of environmental carers. This is what Moraes means when she claims that the Bolsa Verde programme cannot be an isolated measure. Environmental care must be incorporated throughout all government action: "[the Bolsa Verde programme] must come with environmental education also incorporated, exercising the transversality of policies, and this is no longer just a responsibility of the Ministry of the Environment, but of all the 16 Ministries claiming that they will uphold the agenda of defending the earth."

Similarly, Chepkemoi emphasizes the role of governments in creating spaces where Indigenous peoples can take part in decision-making discussions and implementation of actions, following the slogan, "nothing about us without us." She recommends that governments should respect and protect Indigenous peoples' rights including their rights to land, territories, resources, and participation in decisions affecting them. She illustrated this idea by recounting that the Ogiek community, despite winning two court decisions at the African Court on Human and Peoples Rights (2017; 2022), has seen no notable action to restore their land rights. Moreover, she argued, governments should always formulate and implement forest policies with consideration for the free, prior and informed consent of forest-dependent Indigenous peoples which is a fundamental right recognized in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) (UN General Assembly 2007). Similarly, Moraes points out that the government's challenge is to protect those who protect the territories and take care of the carers who conserve and preserve the environment. This commitment aligns with Brazil's current Minister of Environment, Marina Silva's declaration of zero deforestation by 2030, along with the creation of special secretariats to combat deforestation and recognize traditional peoples as forest inhabitants. This includes enlarging the recognition of "extractive reserves" and demarcating Indigenous lands to guarantee rights. Along the same lines, Grajales adds

that the role of governments is to build a just transition with communities, resulting in food, energy, and cultural autonomy and sovereignty. To this end, her organization is working with the Ministry of the Environment on a social dialogue on environmental conflicts. The aim is to advise local communities on alternative solutions for a just transition, incorporating both technical perspectives and ancestral knowledge to build a unique development model based on rural communities' perspectives, not merely a copy of Western models. Such development should ensure, she argues, that human wellbeing is treated as compatible with environmental protection. She also emphasizes the need to create and implement participatory governance models, where organized communities take part in environmental management. This will guarantee conservation and the generation of sustainable development alternatives in strategic ecosystems, avoiding communities' dependency on hydrocarbon extraction.

The Role of Unions and Social Movements

The idea of just transition emerged from unions, but the focus has mostly been on the protection of workers in polluting sectors. The cases described in this report offer insights into what role, if any, unions could play in the development of a just transition for environmental carers.

The Brazilian case underscores the pivotal role of social movement unionism in leading a just transition that safeguards and advocates for earthcare labour, both waged and unwaged. As Moraes reminds us, for example, the National Council of Rubber Tappers, founded by rural union leader Chico Mendes in the late 1970s, has fought for guaranteeing collective access to land and territorial rights in alliance with Indigenous movements in Acre, and then at the national level. Public policy actions on socio-biodiversity and the wealth of forest people would have been unthinkable without it.

For waged workers like Cassau, the role of trade unions is vital to make sure that transition policies take environmental care into account. Thinking of the creation of a policy framework for energy and climate by the Spanish Government in 2019, along with a just transition strategy, she argued that unions must continue to fight to ensure that firefighters are not left behind, pushing to eliminate temporary employment and guaranteeing fair and equitable labour conditions. Unions, she says, can ensure workers have a voice in decision-making, promote environmental education among members and the wider community, and collaborate closely with environmental defence groups and local associations that contribute significantly to the community without financial compensation. Unions can assist with training and advice on occupational risk prevention, providing necessary personal protective equipment, and fostering cooperation between actors.

Similarly, Chepkemoi suggests that unions should prioritize promoting the employment and remuneration of Indigenous people in environmental protection, enabling them to use their skills and benefit from their traditional knowledge without exploitation. This will enhance the adoption of sustainable practices for ecological restoration. Grajales adds that, in addition to their traditional focus on oil sector workers, unions should address environmental issues, and particularly those associated with

the environmental damage caused by oil fields, demanding jobs in environmental reparation: "we could also, in one way or another, repair these territories that today, due to pollution, do not have a projection of an economic alternative that is based on the use of the soil or the use of resources because they are contaminated, so I believe that this could be a fundamental role in the transition on the part of the unions."

Conclusion

As detailed in this report, Chepkemoi, Cassau, Moraes and Grajales have provided some key lessons regarding the role of care work in a just transition. They have highlighted how, in order to ensure that environmental protection is just, the labour of both waged and unwaged environmental carers needs to be recognized, respected and supported. Drawing on their experiences they have reminded us how vulnerable environmental carers feel today in light of extractive economies, fortress conservation and neoliberal policies that fail to protect waged environmental carers such as firefighters. They have also shared important insights about the role of governments, unions and grassroots organizations in these processes.
A just transition that cares for the environment should therefore consider not only the risks environmental carers face, but also the structural conditions that either reinforce or prevent such risks.

CHAPTER 4

A Just Transition in Healthcare

Chapter Summary

This chapter focuses on healthcare workers (primarily those who are paid) and the significance of a just transition strategy for healthcare workers.

Considering healthcare as a critical dimension of a Just Transition, this report is based on testimonies from four representatives from Latin American, European and global unions, complemented by a desk review of recent reports on healthcare in the planetary crisis.

Our main policy recommendations on just transitions in healthcare are as follows:

- Address the social determinants of health, in addition to natural and physical factors.
- Invest adequate resources in addressing gender and ethnic inequalities in healthcare provision and access at the global, national and household levels.
- Address the immigration of healthcare worrkers that benefits rich countries at the expense of poor ones.
- Invest in adequate, decent, secure, and unionized healthcare jobs in hospitals as well as in home and community care.
- Renew healthcare infrastructures to make them resilient, energy efficient, and non-toxic.
- Invest in adequate emergency responses, including healthcare emergencies induced by climate change.
- De-commodify pharmaceuticals and grant access to appropriate medicine to all.
- Plan for just transitions in the healthcare sector, whether the transitions are due to environmental or social factors.

Authors
Dimitris Stevis, Eleonora Gea Piccardi, Stefania Barca

Reviewer
Nicolas Pons-Vignon

Contributors
Baba Aye, Public Services International; Susana Barria, Public Services International (Andean region); Mark Bergfeld, UNI Global Union-Europa; Maia Epstein, Association of Social Service Professionals (Buenos Aires)

Our goal in this chapter is to build the case that just transition policies are appropriate and necessary for healthcare workers and their communities. We start by providing a broad overview of healthcare workers and then highlight the feminization and racialization of the sector, significantly related to international and internal migrations of healthcare workers, mostly women. We argue that unionization is a necessary component of the just transition process, and that unions should be attentive to private sector workers as well as the gender inequalities amongst healthcare workers and in unions. We follow this by placing healthcare work and workers within their broader ecosocial context. We observe that neoliberalism has been the driving force behind the problems facing healthcare provision and access, and argue that just transition policies are necessary for healthcare workers both in and of themselves and as a necessary component of a more ambitious, democratic ecosocial public sphere.

Healthcare Work and Workers

Healthcare systems are a major component of the overall political economy and, in addition to being integral to societal well-being, they also contribute significantly to climate change. They are globally responsible for around 5 percent of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions annually (WHO 2023), mostly from healthcare systems in rich countries. Most of these emissions are due to the extensive footprint of the sector, e.g., production and transportation of pharmaceuticals, disposal of waste and other supply chain related activities (WHO 2023:11).

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that healthcare employs at least 70 million people around the world, but there is an expected shortfall of over 10 million workers by 2030, mostly in middle- and low- income countries (WHO 2024b; also, Boniol et al. 2022). Moreover, this estimate does not include the significant number of workers in the broader healthcare sector, such as those working in pharmaceutical companies, informal workers in long-term care within households, or unpaid family members, largely women, caring for family members facing long or short-term health problems.

The number of migrant healthcare workers in OECD countries has increased by 60 percent over the last decade (see Leitao et al. 2024). Many of the countries in the industrial world, as a result, depend on the immigration of skilled healthcare workers, with significant variability in terms of whether these are physicians or nurses. Skilled immigrant health workers originate in Africa, Eastern Europe, South and Southeast Asia, Latinamerica and the Carribean with destinations in Europe, USA and Canada, Australia, as well as other high-income countries. Moreover, the healthcare sector in several industrial countries depends on the migration of less skilled workers for the operation and maintenance of commercial healthcare facilities, whether hospitals or smaller rehabilitation or longer-term units. This, for example, was very strongly highlighted in the Just Transition Listening Project (Just Transition Listening Project, 2021) in the United States. Finally, many migrant workers, mostly women, provide in-house health care, often including additional domestic work. While many migrants work formally, many others work informally. Even amongst those that work formally there are patterns of discrimination in terms of income and rights (Stockton and Warner 2024).

Migration from parts of the global South to parts of the global North, as well as other High-Income Countries (HICs), further aggravates the existing inequalities and maldistribution of healthcare between HICs and Low- and Middle- Income Countries (LMICs) as well as between rich and poor within countries: in other words, internal migration is a significant component of migration in healthcare as it is in other industries (Ortega and Macabasag 2020). Moreover, there is compelling evidence that the maldistribution of healthcare also takes place across gender, age, ethnicity and economic status and between urban and rural areas (Ortega and Macabasag 2020). This highlights the need for public community-based healthcare that reaches larger numbers of people vs. technology-intensive, often private sector-led healthcare, that is limited to cities or only certain neighbourhoods.

In addition to the significant differentiation amongst paid workers there is a great deal of unpaid care work, mostly done by women. This includes taking care of children when they are sick at home, family members with long term health problems and elderly parents and relatives with health problems. This home-based care work is demanding ergonomically and mentally. It also has implications for the trajectory of women as workers, similar to those associated with staying at home for childcare. Unpaid healthcare work is also very much connected to domestic work (see Chapter 1 for a deeper analysis of domestic work).

Women form the backbone of the global health workforce, comprising 70 percent of health workers worldwide. **While women account for 70 percent of that labour force they hold only 25 percent of senior roles (WHO 2024a)**. The pandemic exacerbated gender inequalities in the sector and highlighted some of the characteristics above. During the Covid-19 crisis, women accounted for 71 percent of confirmed covid cases among healthcare workers across 11 countries with sex-disaggregated data (UN Women 2021). The intersection of gender and racial hierarchies further complicates the situation. For instance, in Brazil, the majority of community health workers (CHWs) are Black women and in OECD and other HIC countries migrant and racialized women are an essential part of the workforce in nursing care assistants, nursing aides, home care aides, household and personal services workers (King-Dejardin 2019:20). In the words of Mark Bergfeld, of UNI Global Union—Europa, health and social care jobs, "have high levels of labor turnover […], have a high percentage of a feminized workforce and a migrant workforce and effectively have low levels of unionization and even lower levels of collective bargaining, unlike oil and gas, and all those other traditionally male options."

Box 11. UNI Global Union—Europa

UNI Global Union is an international federation established on January 1, 2000, uniting over 900 service sector unions from 140 countries and representing about 20 million members. UNI Global Union—Europa represents 7 million service workers across Europe, advocating for essential sectors that sustain the continent's economic and social framework. Headquartered in Brussels, it includes 272 national trade unions from 50 countries. As a cross-border trade union it aims at balancing the interests of workers and employers, amplifying workers' voices, and ensuring long-term sustainability by coordinating service sector unions to build workers' power and by creating inclusive structures. Within the care sector, UNI Europa focuses on organizing workers in the sphere of healthcare (including domestic and home care), enhancing collective bargaining, and striving for a fairer care sector with better wages, stronger unions, and safer working conditions.

Many nurses are compelled to work multiple jobs or take on additional shifts to make ends meet (ILO 2018). This is also the case with community health workers who are trained according to prescribed standards but are under-resourced, frequently underpaid or unpaid, and expected to cover the growing health worker shortages in community healthcare (ILO 2018). This devalorization persists even though healthcare workers have been deemed 'essential' during the pandemic, often receiving only a minimum stipend or nothing at all (UN Women 2021). According to Susana Barria, of Public Services International (PSI) in the Andean region, "we need universal care services so that families bear lesser burden[s] of care, and healthcare workers are not concerned about their families in addition to their heavy workload." This captures the structural position of women in the healthcare system, as is the case with all care work. While they are increasingly part of the formal labour force, albeit in a secondary position compared to men, they also provide unpaid care at home. In her words, "the kind of sectors that are within the broader understanding of care, the education, domestic work, social care, healthcare, all of that [add] an extra burden on the family, and that means mostly on women within families. And I think that's a very important lesson for us to realize how very often care is invisible, and women work as shock absorbers for families and societies at large."

Low unionization characterizes the whole sector. According to Bergfeld, only 1 in 10 healthcare workers in Germany are organized. Looking at existing trade unions, Baba Aye, of Public Services International, underlines that they tend to get stuck in their comfort zones rather than being militant and taking forward a just transition strategy capable of addressing the entire range of socioeconomic and environmental questions. Healthcare unions, according to Aye, should redefine work, reducing it to 35 hour work week and eliminating jobs that are damaging to people's health and the environment: "Unions need to fight for another possible world, a new working type, a new paradigm of life itself. We have to re-envision the world and fight for a new one," he claims.

Box 12. Public Services International

Public Services International (PSI), founded in 1907, represents over 700 trade unions globally, advocating for workers' rights and universal access to public services. They bring workers' voices to international organizations and defend trade union rights and the common good. PSI influences global policy in favor of workers, campaigns for social and economic justice, and builds international solidarity among unions. It provides credible alternatives to the corporate model and lead the fight against privatization. Moreover, it challenges the influence of corporations and wealthy elites, advocating for fair taxation and opposing corporate-sponsored policies. Its members, around 30 million workers over 154 countries, believe in a world where wealth and power are distributed equitably, fighting for the rights and dignity of workers worldwide.

Unionization in the healthcare sector raises important challenges. The first is collaboration across social divisions of labour, from physicians to custodial personnel, including public and private sector workers, formal and informal workers, and diverse sectors, e.g.,

workers directly providing healthcare as well as workers in the pharmaceutical industry. In these efforts workers and unions are facing significant opposition from capital and states. In that vein, unions must pay close attention to the circumstances of workers in the private sector and not limit organizing efforts to public sector workers. Equally importantly, they must pay close attention to the implications of a more vital and effective public sector on private sector workers. For example, the move to universal healthcare in the USA will affect about 1.8 million insurance and office workers who will be made redundant because the public healthcare sector is administratively more efficient (Pollin et al. 2018). In order for those workers to move into other positions in a growing healthcare sector, or elsewhere, it will be necessary to have a massive just transition policy.

Among the recommended union strategies, Bergfeld cites the Frazenius Alliance which includes public service, healthcare but also pharmaceutical sector unions. Barria refers to a PSI affiliate which organizes both healthcare and pharmaceutical workers. The latter, she explains, campaigned, in the context of the G20 summit hosted by Indonesia, to include discussions of a waiver of intellectual property rights, and for public-led and decentralized production of medicines that are not just commodities but public goods.

Maia Epstein, from the Association of Social Service Professionals (Buenos Aires), notes how the WHO has recommended a person-centered care system. This, she explains, usually means a health system centered on the user, not the worker. She calls for a just transition centered also on workers, so that they are taken care of and valued.

Box 13. Association of Social Service Professionals (Buenos Aires)

The Asociación de Profesionales de Servicio Social (Association of Social Service Professionals) (APSS) was founded on July 6, 1984, and primarily brings together Social Workers from public hospitals and health centers in the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires. Since its inception, the APSS has worked on improving working conditions and employment stability, obtaining trade union recognition in 2013. The current management, Lista Naranja Violeta, promotes a democratic and participatory union, encouraging active participation of its members through assemblies and meetings. The APSS is also known for its democratic communication policy, promoting exchanges that strengthen organizational processes in hospitals and health centers. The association collaborates with other trade unions and human rights organizations to achieve its goals and defend a public, comprehensive, free, and high-quality healthcare system, always from a gender perspective.

Existing healthcare unions are mostly run by and made up of women, which inevitably means a triple burden of (largely unpaid) work: at home, in the healthcare sector and in the union. Addressing this issue in terms of social distribution of caring time has therefore been highlighted as a crucial priority for trade unions, both in terms of goals and in terms of their own organization and growth. The political agenda proposed by PSI and its allies aims to redistribute the burden of care amongst social actors so that the state takes the burden off of families by providing quality public care services (People Over Profit 2025). As Epstein highlights,

> Since most of us are women, demands regarding care tasks, domestic tasks, and demands regarding the social distribution of time are quite present. First, it is necessary that we think about the social distribution of time so that we female workers have the time to organize ourselves in unions. Because maybe we have the desire and the will to do it, we are class conscious and feel it is necessary to do this, but we don't have the

time, whereas our male partners do, because women will be assuming care and domestic tasks while they participate in union activities.

Healthcare and Nature

The healthcare sector is intimately related to ecological crisis. Currently, ecological crises, including the climate crisis, increase the demand for healthcare while making its delivery difficult and dangerous for providers and receivers. The sector also produces significant ecological problems—whether due to the consumption of energy and other resources or the production of waste, including toxic waste. Even workers in the formal sector are subject to significant ecological stresses that vary by position and by location. These are frequently due to the quality of the built environment in which they work as well the long hours, intensity, and health and environmental risks involved.

The pandemic highlighted the serious contradictions inherent in healthcare. Aye describes it as the intersection of social, economic, and environmental crises. The environmental emergency, he explains, has led to increases in zoonotic transmission (transmission of diseases between humans and animals). Moreover, the environmental impacts produced by the healthcare system are not only infrastructural but also process-related (e.g. the use of hazardous chemicals). Paradoxically, at least one billion people are served by health facilities without reliable access to electricity, highlighting the severe resource gaps in global health infrastructure (WHO 2023).

Barria reminds us how environmental degradation (floods, droughts, pollution and extreme events) affect living conditions and therefore people's health, causing a higher demand for healthcare services. Moreover, after such disasters, there is a subsequently higher risk of infectious diseases. Adding to the difficulty of attending to healthcare needs in these situations, she explains that public healthcare infrastructures in South Asia, as well as in many countries in the global South, are often old, underfunded, and ill-equipped to withstand the impact of extreme events. Extreme climate events are also affecting HICs, with healthcare systems, as highlighted by Bergfeld, permanently understaffed, with underpaid and/or precarious workers.

Climate change is also impacting the healthcare sector, as a significant contributor to GHG emissions. This dual role underscores the need for creating, "climate-resilient and low-carbon health systems," to mitigate these emissions while maintaining essential health services (WHO 2023).

While all countries have been affected by the pandemic, the global South, particularly low- and medium- income countries, faced the biggest challenge, due to short and long-term problems (UNCTAD 2022; Loungani et al. 2023). Armed conflict is a also a major concern in a number of countries, produced by geopolitical competition (e.g., over minerals in the DRC), and environmental and social problems, like floods or malnutrition. These shorter-term problems are worsened by fiscal austerity which has put wealth before health, as shown by the fact that a staggering sixty-four countries currently allocate more funds to debt servicing than to healthcare (Debt Justice 2020). According to Aye, "Every second, the money to pay the experienced nurse is lost to the tax heaven." Neoliberal austerity policies are identified by Barria as responsible for reduced capacity of public

healthcare systems as risk increases. Similarly, Epstein explains that neoliberal policies since the 1980s have heavily affected the healthcare sector in South America.

Over the last several decades neoliberalism has either stalled or prevented meaningful improvements to healthcare systems. The result is inadequate health policy and the absence of sufficient personnel and physical infrastructure. This imposes serious burdens on existing health workers in the delivery of care but, also, with respect to their own wellbeing (see Pons-Vignon et al. 2024 on healthcare workers in Switzerland). These dynamics especially impact the delivery of rural care with higher shortages of personnel, fewer specialized training opportunties, and inadequate buildings and infrastructure. While these problems are particularly pressing in LMICs, HICs are not insulated from them, as the neoliberal privatization of healthcare privileges the production of highly paid specialists, but makes general healthcare work more difficult (Pons-Vignon et al. 2024) while allowing healthcare in rural areas and to the poor, to decline.

Just Transition Towards a Democratic Eco-social Public Sphere

As we have noted, just transition proposals and policies have primarily focused on the impact of climate change on industrial workers. Important and pressing as this is, we need to remember that the strategy of just transition emerged as a response to the neoliberal turn during the 1970s and after. While it addressed the 'jobs vs. environment' version of job blackmail (see Kazis and Grossman 1991[1982]) it was never intended to be limited to that. The reasons for its association with climate change and energy are important but they are only part of the story. Just transition policies are necessary for all workers and communities facing transitions, including those of heathcare and other care workers. In fact, even though the union representatives who have contributed to this chapter are quite familiar with the strategy of just transition, they recognize that the strategy has been largely associated with industrial workers in the energy sector and not always a priority in their sector.

In recent years there have been various proposals to connect healthcare and just transition. At one level some of the literature highlights the need for health justice for workers and communities in the energy sector (Narayan 2023). That particular literature does not identify the need for unmediated just transition in healthcare, but does highlight the need to integrate healthcare into the energy transition. An additional stream adds health justice to the mix of sectoral justices and seeks to integrate it into a just transition framework (Pamuksu and Harris 2022). A third stream does highlight the need for unmediated just transition in healthcare (Stevis, Krause and Morena 2021). Here, we recognize the intersections between healthcare and all other sectors and argue that a comprehensive just transition (including energy and energy-related industries), must address the healthcare sector. However, we also suggest that transitions affecting healthcare workers and their communities, including those that are due to 'non-environmental' factors, such as automation, artificial intelligence (AI), demographic factors or crises, also require just transition policies.

This report prioritizes the importance of a just transition strategy for healthcare workers that, as Epstein framed it, is first and foremost,

sensitive to the work environment and the social determinants of health (i.e. everyday caring and provisioning, which are overwhelmingly left to women's unpaid work), rather than taking the development of a sustainable economic model as the starting point. Along this line of thinking, Barria emphasizes the importance of just transition principles and directions regarding waste management in hospitals, energy efficiency of infrastructures, adaptation to local conditions, but also the need for expanding public services, giving priority to primary healthcare and access to healthcare in rural areas. Moreover, she stresses that: "Healthcare workers need to know that they are valued and that their contribution to just transition solutions is appreciated."

For Aye just transition policies should address the root causes of existent inequalities from the perspective of affected workers and communities, furthering "international financial justice." Healthcare, as Bergfeld argued, should be about the challenge of expanding public services in contexts of permanent financial crisis, and where the social determinants of health are constantly under pressure, aggravated by the environmental crisis. Designing effective emergency responses to ecological crises, therefore requires attention to impacts on care labour, i.e. taking measures to prevent women from losing their jobs or having to increase their unpaid care work. The focus on expanding public services and expanding the public sphere is shared by all contributors and is consistent with the intent of just transition strategies to expand the public sphere.

Socialized healthcare is one of the crown jewels of the social welfare state and its expansion is central to the vitality of a democratic public sphere. The healthcare sector is similar to the education sector because in both cases their formal component clearly points to those parts of the sector that are still in the shadows of informality and precarity. In the words of Barria,

> the question of just transition comes in, because I think a central element has been the role of strong public services, because public means it can be universalized…. So, we need to continue pushing that narrative of the centrality of public services for healthcare but also for social care, because otherwise we are contributing to an unequal system, a social organization of care that puts the pressure on women within the family.

Stated otherwise, the absence of universal healthcare not only deprives people from health benefits, but, also, displaces the demands of healthcare onto particular categories of people—predominantly women in the family or migrants employed in precarious conditions in homes and health facilities.

Conclusion

A just transition that treats healthcare as a key part of a democratic public sphere requires attention to the structural inequalities faced by both healthcare providers and receivers. Ensuring universal access to healthcare is essential, but will depend on changes like decommodifying pharmaceuticals as a central pillar of comprehensive public healthcare systems. From the point of view of healthcare workers addressing the impacts of migration is a central issue as is the need to address all transitions in the sector, whether due to environmental, technological or other reasons. Finally, a just transition requires more resources and rights for healthcare workers, but also, attention to the physical environment in which they work and their preparedness for emergencies.

CHAPTER 5

A Just Transition in Education

Chapter Summary

This chapter focuses on education workers, primarily those who are paid, and the significance of a just transition strategy for education.

Considering education as a critical dimension of a just transition, this report is based on testimonies from three union representatives from the USA, the UK and global unions, complemented by a desk review of recent reports on educational work in the planetary crisis.

Our main policy recommendations on just transition in education are as follows:

- Recognize that education involves nurturing; it is therefore a fundamental form of public care work.
- Recognize and value educators as key actors including in the post-carbon transition. Make education a more appealing profession.
- Recognize that education can be a desirable and growing form of work in the post-carbon economy.
- Invest in safe and energy-efficient educational physical infrastructures while utilizing them for the production of energy.
- Enhance the social infrastructural role of educators and education in bringing their communities together and helping educate them to shift to a low-carbon economy.
- Recognize that educators and education must train students for greener jobs, but also, more care-centred jobs.
- Educational systems should not breed individualism and unsustainability, but teach equality, human rights and climate justice for all.
- Educational systems, should teach people how to care for the earth, for other species and other peoples.

Authors
Dimitris Stevis, Eleonora Gea Piccardi

Reviewer
Kathleen Lynch

Contributors
Alanah Torralba (Education International, Philippines), Jenny Cooper (National Education Union, UK), Todd Vachon (American Federation of Teachers—AFT).

In this chapter we argue that a just transition is necessary and appropriate for educational workers and their communities. We start with an overview of educational workers and highlight the feminization of teaching in most parts of the world, and the increasing precarization of educational work. While unionization rates in the sector are often high there are significant gaps, both around the world and with respect to particular categories of workers, e.g. contract workers. We follow this by examining education and educational workers in relation to environmental change, particularly climate change. In the third part we place education within the broader political economy and explore the challenges of neoliberalism, both in terms of resources for public education and in terms of limiting the objective of education to human capital development rather than the production of both well-trained workers and well-informed and active caring citizens. We close by highlighting the role of education in ensuring an ecosocial just transition and climate justice as a central component of a larger democratic public sphere.

Education Work and Workers

Care in the form of education is provided in many places. A great deal of it takes place before children go to school formally and, once in school, families play a key role by caring for them, supporting homework and helping with subjects not offered in schools. In those countries that have university entry exams, like Greece or South Korea, families also absorb significant economic and psychological costs despite the public nature of education. A great deal of that work falls on the shoulders of mothers (Joshi 2023).

While most educational workers in the primary and secondary sectors are formal workers there are also many contract workers. In those countries that have national entrance exams many teachers work in a largely privatized tutoring industry with limited protections and income (personal experience). Most workers in the primary and secondary sectors, with some regional variability, are women (see Arnold and Rahimi 2024).

According to the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2024), the world needs an additional 44 million, mostly secondary school teachers, to achieve SDG4 targets. These shortages are due to growing populations, hence a shortage of 15 million in Africa (UNESCO 2024). Attrition is also more pronounced among young male teachers, leading to the feminization of the educational labour force. In many countries the teaching profession is becoming less attractive and respected, due to relatively low levels of remuneration, inadequate supports and poor working conditions (e.g., Hofmeyr et al. 2024).

In post-secondary education some of the more well remunerated and socially valued disciplines, e.g., science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), continue to be primarily male-dominated. However, what has historically been considered a prestigious and safe line of work is increasingly dependent on precariously employed labour in both research and teaching (in addition to being very hierarchal) (Gallas 2018).[7] Contract and at will researchers have been integral to higher education for much longer than in elementary and secondary schools, and include graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, lab personnel, and others. The numbers of at will teachers have exploded during the last 2-3

[7] This work draws on research on the USA, South Africa, Germany and Turkey, i.e., high- and middle-income countries.

decades and include graduate assistants but, also, non-tenured or adjunct faculty. In most for-profit universities, a growing industry around the world, most personnel are contractual.

Even though education workers are highly unionized in many countries they have not yet been able to curb the development of a two- or multi-tier system due to the growing neo-liberalization of education: education is increasingly treated as a commodity to be bought on the private market rather than as a social good that is essential for the realization of human rights (Zancajo et al. 2025). However, as our collaborators pointed out, the existence of unions provides an opportunity for educational workers to, at least, resist these trends and to play a more active role in pushing the education sector to advance environmental knowledge, climate justice and adopt a more inclusive view of education as part of the public sphere.

Like healthcare and other components of the social welfare state, education has become more accessible over the last century and after WWII. This has been evident in even liberal capitalist countries like the USA. Education has also been a priority in the newly independent countries of Africa and Asia. The rise and intensification of neoliberalism since the 1970s has slowed the universalization of education, and other social services, in rich countries and, even more so, in poorer countries which, disciplined by structural adjustment policies, abandoned their most ambitious aims (Verger et al. 2016; Rizvi 2016).

Neoliberalism affects education in two ways. First, in terms of the purpose it assigns to education and, second, by cutting investment in public education. An important debate that was highlighted by all of our collaborators is that of the role of education. The general attitude of governments, businesses, powerful policy-making multilateral bodies such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (Sorenson et al. 2021; Égert et al. 2022), the European Commission, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and much of society, is that education's role is to prepare skilled workers or human capital to serve industries central to capital and the military. As a result, over their educational trajectory, students learn to value particular kinds of jobs over others. Similarly, teachers and professors teaching in those disciplines are better remunerated and supported, e.g., business schools and STEM.

In contrast, our collaborators highlighted that the role of education is to produce informed and well-functioning citizens who can reflect on and respond to the broader dynamics in which they operate. Skill development is necessary but should take place within these parameters. Moreover, it should not be limited to STEM disciplines but must include all skills, including those necessary for the care sectors. Finally, education is also important in challenging those practices that are exploitative of humanity and nature. There is no reason, for example, why students should not know about the detrimental impacts of certain practices and of ways to replace them. In the words of Jenny Cooper, from the National Education Union (NEU) (UK),

> of course, there's the aspect of lifelong education and learning, so not only preparing the future workforce for what we hope will be more green jobs in the economy but also retraining and re-educating people that are in sectors that may not continue, so that they can be reskilled and still have fulfilled working lives

> even though it might change from what it has been. And then the other aspect around education is about teaching people for a society that is framed in a more fair and caring way because ultimately, we know that that is the only way that society, and the planet can be sustainable … in the UK, we used to have citizenship education.

In addition to these challenges, the educational sector is also facing the impacts of technological innovations, such as various forms of knowledge delivery, e.g., online courses, that require less labour and, increasingly, artificial intelligence (AI) (UNESCO 2025). Cooper pointed out that in the UK education system, trade unionist representatives are only minimally included in sustainability dialogues and she calls for proper two-way conversations with sector representatives—dialogue rather than tick-box consultation. Governments should prioritize public sector funding, consider educators as equal partners in policymaking, and ensure transition also in low carbon jobs not only in high carbon industries. She argues that this approach should be guided by the idea that workers are not only interested in economic benefit, but that they, "also care about the people that they work with, and we need our work to be meaningful," and that, "it is actually a good value to prioritize the public, the low carbon, and the caring sectors because that is a good way of getting your carbon emissions down and transitioning your workforce."

Neoliberal policies are attacking public education around the world by providing less support (Verger et al. 2016; Antoni et al. 2016; Global Education Cooperation Mechanism 2024). These attacks involve a decline in infrastructural investment, labour shortages due to lower salaries, harsher working conditions, particularly for the large numbers of precarious workers, and the promotion of for-profit education. Our collaborators pointed out that these trends can prevent education from advancing environmental sensibility, climate justice and just transition. Cooper stressed the need for a complete re-prioritization of funding as part of a just transition and argued that public access to resources for education must be ensured, countering the greed and unsustainable lifestyles of the better-off that have driven climate change.

Box 14. National Education Union (UK)

The National Education Union is the largest education union in the UK, representing teachers, lecturers, support staff, and school leaders across maintained [public] and independent schools and colleges. It plays a crucial role in collective bargaining, negotiating with employers on issues such as health and safety, pay, working conditions, and redundancies.

In addition to workplace representation, the NEU has a strong presence in governmental and policy discussions, enabling members to influence education policy through surveys, meetings, and conferences. The union campaigns to shape the future of education, collaborating with allies to address key issues like workload, funding, child poverty, assessment, and pay.

In the context of neoliberalism, three central questions arise: 1.) will unions be able to resist privatization and casualization of work; 2.) will they be able to—or are they willing to—organize less protected educational workers; and 3.) will they adopt environmental priorities, especially climate justice. The significant pool

of less protected educational workers produces a kind of 'job blackmail' that makes it difficult for educational workers to advance bold initiatives. As Todd Vachon, from the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) (USA) stated, strengthening the role of unions thus emerges as pivotal: they can both build power within civil society and pressure governments into taking bolder climate action. He cited the American Federation of Teachers at Rutgers University, where a climate justice committee successfully organized a climate strike and won demands for a net-zero emissions plan and fossil fuel divestment. Similar efforts are underway with the Chicago Teachers Union and the Massachusetts Teacher Association, developing climate justice education standards and partnering with local governments to create green new deals for education.

Box 15. American Federation of Teachers (USA)

Founded in Chicago in 1916, the American Federation of Teachers represents 1.8 million members across 3,000 affiliates. Its membership includes K-12 teachers, school staff, higher education professionals, government employees, healthcare workers, 80,000 early childhood educators, and 250,000 retirees.

As a union of professionals, the AFT advocates for fairness, democracy, economic opportunity, and high-quality public education, healthcare, and public services. Through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining, and political activism, the AFT works to advance these principles. Over the years, the AFT has prioritized key issues such as free public education, safe working conditions, fair pay, child labour laws, tenure for teachers, and women's rights. The fight for civil rights has been a central focus. Globally, the AFT has supported the development of free trade unions and democracy education, particularly in Eastern Europe during the end of communism.

Education and Nature

By placing education within the broader political economy our collaborators highlighted both the environmental impacts of education and its potential. A massive and significant part of physical infrastructure serves educational purposes. As a result, the space, resources and energy this infrastructure uses has a significant impact on the environment and climate (U.S. Energy Information Agency 2018a and b). Like all physical infrastructure it must be updated to address its normal deterioration and in order to respond to demographic shifts and environmental concerns, such as climate change.

Much of the existing educational infrastructure does not protect workers and students from extreme weather. In fact, declining investment due to privatization, and neoliberal policies have gone hand in hand with a decline in the quality of educational infrastructure (Antoni et al. 2016).

Alanah Torralba, from Education International (EI) was involved in a study by her organization which revealed that,

> educators were unanimous in saying that education systems are ill prepared for the recent stream of climate impacts, particularly heat waves. So, for example in countries like the UK and India, classrooms are becoming unbearably hot during the summer, such that educators are forced to shut their classes, and move to online groups of teaching or cancel classes altogether, and this has a myriad of implications for labour rights, because any disruption, as you would know, on the school calendar, as educators themselves would know, means more unpaid labour and stress for educators.

Box 16. Education International

Founded in 1993, Education International is the Global Union Federation representing over 32 million teachers and education support personnel across 178 countries and territories. Through its 383 member organizations, EI champions free, quality, publicly funded education worldwide, while promoting the interests and rights of education professionals at an international level.

EI stands for the development of independent democratic organizations for education employees and fosters solidarity and cooperation among them. It advocates for teacher qualifications and the recognition of teaching as a profession, defending democracy, social justice, human rights, and trade union rights. EI also focuses on advancing equity and challenging all forms of discrimination through its policies and advocacy efforts.

The organization works to ensure that governments fulfil their educational promises and supports the direct involvement of teachers in shaping education policies. Moreover, it is committed to advancing gender equality in education, and leads campaigns like Teach for the Planet to inspire climate action and a just transition.

Cooper underscored the issue of deteriorating infrastructure in the public sector, highlighting that many buildings are not prepared for floods, heatwaves and other extreme weather events due to years of underfunding. In the USA, as explained by Vachon, schools are funded through local taxes, creating significant inequalities. Lower-income areas already face issues like mould exposure and poor air quality, which are exacerbated by climate change.

But, as he also pointed out, there are opportunities due to the massive infrastructure of education.

> In the physical sense schools and universities occupy massive amounts of public land, millions of square feet of rooftops that are exposed to the sun, use billions and millions of gallons of water each day, generate untold tons of waste from food and trash in the classroom, and also use an incredible amount of electricity each day. But also, they provide a great opportunity for rapid energy transitions. All of this publicly owned land space and square footage of rooftops that are exposed to the sun can really be key sites for an energy transition, for siting and placement of renewable sources, which is always one of the big political struggles—land use.

In addition to considering educational areas as physical infrastructure, education is also a central part of social infrastructure because it brings together individuals and communities in a variety of ways. Because education workers are at the center of communities, educational unions can play an important role. All of our collaborators highlighted the significant role that education can play in enhancing our understanding of environmental change, in general, and climate change in particular. While connected to just transition, which is discussed more directly below, environmental or sustainability education involves more than just transition.

Cooper pointed to the importance of teaching children the truth about climate change, preparing them for a world facing food insecurity, conflict, and migration. However, she noted that many educational systems have overly prescriptive curricula that deny or obscure these realities. Torralba argued that an education for just transition should break away from the neoliberal model that individualizes actions and limits climate change education to planting trees or recycling, and towards a more collective approach to structural change, justice, and solidarity. In the same line, Vachon referred to the need to centre racial and gender justice and address historical inequalities. In general, our collaborators advocate for education that promotes communal access to resources, reduces the carbon footprint, and distributes wealth more equitably.

Towards a Just Transition in Education

Just transition was central in the comments of all of our collaborators and reflects increasing attention to the issue by various educational unions, including EI (Torralba 2022). The threats that existing inequalities, advancing neoliberalism and technological change pose to education are clear, but they can be addressed through the lenses of climate justice and just transition and as domains in which education could play a positive and leading role, thus resisting and reversing unjust transitions (e.g., Vachon 2024; EI 2024).

However, as Cooper pointed out,

> just transition is not just about the huge high carbon industries, […] a transition is needed within the low carbon sectors as well because we are also affected in a myriad of different ways. When we talk about just transition, we don't just talk about that because we want workers to benefit, obviously we do want workers to be protected, but workers also care about the people that they work with, and we need our work to be meaningful. So, for example, as an educator if you feel that you're being forced to teach something that's not right or is not the truth it's very difficult to live with. Low carbon sectors also face life-threatening realities such as overheated workplaces that's the same for nurses with their patients or doctors or educators.

Torralba commented that, although Western-generated, "the just transition concept or framework offers for educators, especially unionists, a standpoint that values their position as workers, values labour rights." It goes beyond mere curriculum reform or symbolic gestures like tree planting, folding educators into systemic efforts to tackle the climate crisis. Additionally, she argued that a just transition should recognize teaching as a low-carbon profession and push for policies that integrate teachers into the green economy, including retraining and reskilling for low-carbon industries. In a recent briefing (Torralba, 2023), she additionally highlighted how the fossil fuel industry obstructs climate action through what has been termed "petro-pedagogy"—the interference of energy interests in education systems, particularly in the US, Australia, Canada, and the UK. She contends that education unions must prioritize divestment campaigns to revoke the industry's social license to operate and redirect funding toward cleaner energy.

Our collaborators object to the idea that the role of education is to train people solely for the needs of corporations and the political order. Education can contribute to training workers for a sustainable economy while also training them as citizens. In addition, they pointed out that education jobs are low-carbon jobs and there are massive needs for more education workers.

According to Vachon, "one piece of it is obviously educating workers to work in a green economy, help educate displaced workers at a post-secondary level, so technical colleges, community colleges, are going to play a very significant role in helping workers transition away from fossil fuel industries into whatever jobs and occupations they may want to pursue or that are available to them in their localities," because there's often a geographic mismatch between where the green economy is popping up and where the fossil fuel economy is slowly shutting down.

Torralba pointed out that in an EI project she participated in, "educators were united around the idea that a just transition in the sector should also recognize the profession as a low-carbon job…. I believe this means that the sector should actually take the lead in retraining and reskilling the workers for low-carbon industries. In this way a just transition framework connects the long-standing struggles of the sector against privatization with the more pressing concerns, the requirements of the climate crisis."

In short, educators are important in promoting just transition and climate justice. Their work encompasses educating and mobilizing community members for climate action, lifelong learning, preparing the future workforce for green jobs, retraining displaced workers from declining industries, and, of course, advocating for new curricula and school models which relate to the questions of: How just transition can be transformative? And how can a just transition in education prefigure a less hierarchical society? The role of education workers and their unions in advancing these goals is both necessary and realistic given the fact that the sector is well unionized even in liberal capitalist countries like the USA.

Towards that end, our collaborators underscored that integrating just transition into the curriculum means teaching for a more fair and caring society, as this is essential for sustainability. Decolonizing curricula has to do with teaching caring values and ethics in schools, spending time in nature, and learning to care for others through interactions with the environment and animals. This also means countering current educational models based on competition and valuing certain jobs over others, often dismissing critical roles such as caring for the elderly or disabled because they are not financially valued. Integrating educational care work into a just transition means that care must be recognized as a critical part of our political economy and societal roles.

Conclusion

Individually and collectively our collaborators highlighted the historical centrality of education in the formation of the public sphere, even in liberal capitalist countries like the USA, and the necessary role of education in broadening and deepening the public sphere in a number of ways. First, that requires respect and resources for education and education workers, ensuring that access to education is universal. Second, education must promote the common good, which is about more than producing narrowly skilled workers for private industry. Rather, it should produce skilled workers across all sectors but, also, workers and citizens who can deliberate about and play an active role in the political economy. Third, education can teach students, and thus society, about the impacts of environmental change, particularly climate change, and do so from the perspective of climate justice and just transition, rather than treating climate change as a technical problem.

Schools, colleges and universities can empower students to be socially and climatically just in their thinking, and in their social, economic and political actions by educating them to be caring. Educational institutions have the power to create consciousness and concern for the dependencies and interdependencies that are endemic to the human condition.

CONCLUSION

A Call for a Care-Centred Future

This report is the result of a collective inquiry with care workers,[8] unionists, activists, and researchers from across the globe. It started from a simple but powerful observation: the international policy framework for a just transition, which aims to guide us toward a post-carbon future, is largely ignoring the very work that makes life possible. While focused on compensating job losses in carbon-intensive industries, it has failed to see the vast world of care work—both paid and unpaid—as central to any just and ecological transformation. Our conversation, spanning the sectors of domestic and community care, subsistence food provisioning, environmental care, healthcare, and education, confirms that a transition that is not centred on care is a transition that will deepen existing crises and injustices.

Our main contribution has been to articulate an expanded understanding of care work based on its five fundamental dimensions. This framework allows us to see the common threads that bind a domestic worker ensuring a household's well-being, a community activist running a food bank, an Indigenous farmer preserving seeds, a seasonal firefighter protecting a forest, a nurse in an underfunded hospital, and a teacher in a public school. These are not marginal activities; they are the essential, life-making and life-sustaining work that holds our societies and our planet together. Yet, they are consistently undervalued, rendered invisible, and burdened by policies that prioritize markets over well-being and men over women. A care-centred just transition, therefore, is not about adding care to an existing energy-focused plan. It is about a paradigm shift—from a care-less economic system, driven by profit, growth, patriarchy and racialization, to a care-full one, where the satisfaction of universal human and ecological needs becomes the primary objective of political and economic life.

This shift requires a decisive move away from the logic of commodification and a reaffirmation of a democratic public sector as the key arena for guaranteeing care as a universal right. It demands that we acknowledge and rectify the

[8] Throughout this report, we use the term "care workers" to include both waged and unwaged workers, even when not explicitly stated, and encompassing all five dimensions proposed in this report.

ecological and climate debt owed by the global North to the global South and from the rich to the poor. And it is fundamentally incompatible with a capitalist culture that treats nature and human labour as disposable inputs. The recommendations that have emerged from our inquiry are a blueprint for this transformation. They call upon governments and intergovernmental bodies to take direct responsibility for fostering a care-centric future through concrete actions.

We demand that just transition strategies be radically reoriented to:

- Massively invest in public care systems by divesting from fossil fuels, extractive industries, military spending, socially and ecologically harmful production, and private over-consumption; channel those resources into creating dignified, unionized jobs in care sectors; and build resilient, climate-adapted care infrastructures.
- Formally recognize, value, and support all care workers, both paid and unpaid, by ensuring living incomes, social security, safe working conditions, legal rights, and political representation
- Guarantee the universal right to receive quality care by ensuring equitable access to services like healthcare, education, childcare, and eldercare, and by preparing these systems for the increasing needs driven by climate and health crises.
- Protect ecosystems by recognizing land rights for Indigenous and peasant communities, supporting agroecology and community-based environmental care, and valuing their knowledge as essential to territorial stewardship.

Looking ahead, the path forward requires concerted efforts on multiple fronts. For researchers: although our work has acknowledged the critical intersections of care work with migration, disability, class, and racial justice, a more sustained analysis is needed. We also recognize that research must cover more places and people within the world political economy, both within highly polluting sectors and in the emerging green economies, and the conditions of care work in sectors such as cleaning and hospitality. Moreover, the profound inequalities faced by care receivers should be considered as integral to the analysis of care work in just transitions.

We invite future scholarship to build upon this report by undertaking a deeper exploration of these areas, alongside the development of new metrics for wellbeing that go beyond GDP. For social movements and unions, it is a call to become more inclusive and democratic organizations and build alliances that bridge the divides between industrial and care workers, formal and informal sectors, and environmental and social justice struggles. We hope this report can serve as a useful tool for popular education and social mobilization, creating a powerful mandate for change.

The current confluence of crises—ecological, social, and care—is not just a threat; it is an unprecedented historical opportunity. It is the chance to reorient our political economies toward what truly matters. The voices gathered in this report show that the knowledge and the will for this transformation already exist among those who have always been doing the work of care. The challenge for policymakers is to finally listen to carers and to respond to their demands. A future that is both just and sustainable can only be a future that is built around and with care workers.

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Chapter 4
A Just Transition in Healthcare

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JUST TRANSITION AND CARE WORK

An International Inquiry

Currently, just transition strategies and policies tend to focus on formal industrial jobs in the energy, manufacturing and transport sectors. In particular, they tend to pay limited attention to care work and its centrality to satisfying human needs while also reproducing society and protecting the biophysical environment. Following critiques and pressures from feminist, peasant, Indigenous, environmental and climate justice organizations, however, awareness of the broader potentialities of the just transition framework for socioecological transformation is growing. In its expanded version, just transition includes both a concern for decent green jobs and for the conditions that sustain people's lives beyond the job, including the household, the community, land, water, forests, and the infrastructures and public services that are essential to human wellbeing. Contributing to this bottom-up process of reframing just transition policies, and reconnecting to its original emancipatory spirit, this report invites us to rethink the just transition framework based on the experiences, perspectives and demands of care workers (both waged and unwaged) and their organizations.

This report is based on an international 'workers' inquiry' process involving actors in different areas of care work, collecting their perspectives on the social and ecological challenges they face and what they see as necessary to tackle them, with particular attention to just transition strategy. The sectors we examined include: 1) housework and care for people, in both domestic and community spaces; 2) peasant and Indigenous food provision; 3) environmental care in community-led conservation and restoration; 4) healthcare; and 5) education.

In short, this report claims that, to protect people and the planet, just transition policies must properly include the rights and needs of care workers.

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