
Roadmap for Action on the Care Economy in Asia and the Pacific





The Challenge

The Covid-19 pandemic exposed the fragility, inadequacy, and injustice of global care infrastructure. Women's disproportionate share of unpaid care responsibilities increased significantly due to school and daycare closures, heightened eldercare and disability care needs, lockdowns, and other disruptions.¹ Even before the pandemic, women in Asia and the Pacific worked the longest hours globally, with more than half the time spent on unpaid care work. This has negatively affected women's economic advancement, individual agency, physical and mental well-being, and leadership. During the pandemic, an alarming number of women (particularly mothers) were pushed out of the workforce or reduced their paid work hours, contributing to the expanded gender

income gap. Many paid care workers (most of whom are women) routinely endure poor working conditions and compensation, while also facing increased mental and physical risks and economic strain in the aftermath of the pandemic. This is particularly true for migrant care workers who face increased risk of low pay, abuse, and mistreatment, particularly if they are undocumented. Meanwhile, millions of older persons, children, and persons with disabilities remain confined to institutions, with congregate care still a primary - and increasing - form of provision in many countries. The social and economic impacts of poor care policies and infrastructure on childcare, eldercare, and disability care, and on care providers themselves are staggering.

¹ For reference, see: <https://data.unwomen.org/publications/two-years-lingering-gendered-consequences-covid-19-asia-and-pacific> <https://data.unwomen.org/publications/unlocking-lockdown-gendered-effects-covid-19-achieving-sdgs-asia-and-pacific>

The Bali Care Economy Dialogue

Designed to leverage global momentum around transforming the care economy while elevating Asia-Pacific perspectives on care, the Bali Care Economy Dialogue was a collaboration across a partner

consortium that included The Asia Foundation, The Center for Global Development, Oxfam Canada, WeProsper Coalition, UN Women, The Global Alliance for Care, and International Development Research

Centre (IDRC). Asia-Pacific-based partners included the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA), Mobile Creches, Fiji Women's Rights Movement, The Gender Lab, ARROW, and the Pacific Disability Forum. Taking place in Ubud, Bali on 12-14 November 2022, on the margins of the G20 Leaders' Summit, the Bali Care Economy Dialogue brought together nearly 80 participants from government, the private sector, civil

society, multilateral agencies and academia to collaboratively identify actionable policies and strategies to build a resilient care work ecosystem in Asia and the Pacific. Participants worked to build a larger regional agenda to capitalize on Asia-Pacific global moments in 2023 where robust policy and programmatic commitments can be made, including the G20 Summit in India, the Japan G7 Presidency, and the U.S. hosting APEC.

The White Paper



By evaluating promising care-related interventions for governments, civil society, and the private sector, the draft white paper served as a foundation to foster evidence-based discussion at the Bali Care Economy Dialogue.

The Asia Foundation led the development of a white paper, **Toward a Resilient Care Ecosystem in Asia and the Pacific**, that synthesizes key insights and gaps related to the role of governments, markets and the private sector, civil society, and households and families in meeting care needs in Asia and the Pacific. The paper delves into issues of paid and unpaid care, formal and informal care work, care infrastructure, and the intersection of the care issues with climate change, migration, conflict, and gender-based violence. By evaluating promising care-related interventions for governments, civil society, and the private sector, the draft white paper served as a foundation to foster evidence-based discussion at the Bali Care Economy Dialogue. Based on insights and priorities discussed at the Dialogue, The Asia Foundation revised, finalized, and launched the white paper at a **virtual reflection session on January 12, 2023** to spur a collaborative agenda for action on building a resilient Asia-Pacific care economy of the future.

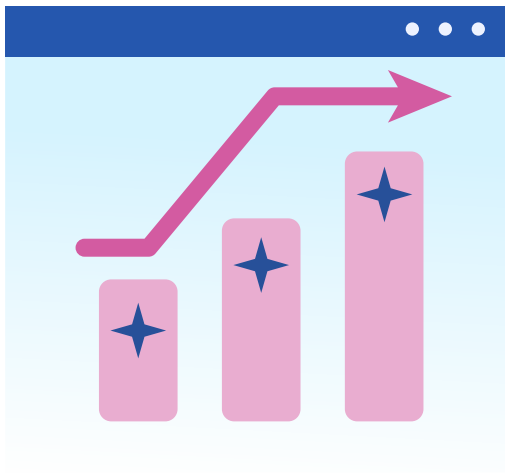
Bali Care Economy Dialogue Highlights and Priority Topics



In her keynote remarks, Dr. Bama Athreya (U.S. Agency for International Development) announced the United States' intention to join the **Global Alliance for Care**. Other governments in the region and many of the organizations at the Dialogue seem poised to do the same, representing an exciting shift toward greater engagement in the Alliance from Asian and Pacific stakeholders.

Increasing financing for care programs, policies, and priorities

was a key theme that ran throughout the panel discussions, specifically pushing for national governments and donors to invest in building data and evidence, filling gaps in our understanding of the care ecosystem, and implementing gender-responsive care policies and infrastructure. All stakeholders need to socialize care as a priority among key decision makers and support the testing and scaling of community and cooperative models for wider coverage. In addition to public investment in affordable, quality care services, **private sector financing and provisioning of care services** through entrepreneurship and corporate investment was another area of focus, particularly the ways in which the private sector can help expand access to these services. **Effective government regulation** of the private sector must be in place to protect the rights of care workers and ensure fair compensation and decent working conditions, as well as dignity for those receiving care.

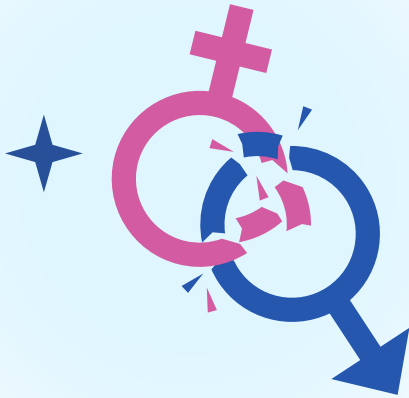


The Governments of Fiji and Nepal are testing **whole-of-government approaches** to coordinating and leading the development of robust care systems by establishing national-level coordination mechanisms to build synergies across ministries responsible for care policies and programs. Applying a rights-based approach to ASEAN's Comprehensive Framework on Care Economy could serve as the basis of an ASEAN Forum on the Care Economy to encourage more governments in the region to adopt more holistic care policies.



Elevating the perspectives and direct engagement of care workers and care receivers themselves at the policy level and in regional and global forums is essential for influencing government and donor priorities, including through trade unions and associations representing care workers. Improving perceptions of and attitudes toward care work as a profession, is critical to improving the working conditions and future pipeline of care workers. This includes creating and funding education and training pipelines, including retraining.

- ★ **Migrant care workers** (which include many domestic workers) are increasingly performing care services across the region with often inadequate protections under precarious contractual conditions, low remuneration, and few avenues to advocate for their rights. While Southeast Asia has long been an origin region for migrant domestic workers, Pacific Island nations are newly seeing increased domestic labor migration, raising new questions regarding how to create effective protection frameworks around migration, establish more research and evidence to improve social protection policies, and how the region can meet its own care needs in the face of out-migration of both young and experienced care workers.



★ **Catalyzing gender norms change** around care work through behavioral change programs and policy reform such as parental leave policies is essential for achieving equitable distribution of care work across genders.

- ★ **There is a tension in the region regarding the framing of care imperatives.** Policy debates around care are almost exclusively driven by economic growth and return on investment in Asia. Care as a human right, including the right to care - and decent work for care workers, particularly those in the informal sector - is missing from mainstream political dialogue. Advocates and practitioners in the region need to use economic arguments to achieve short-term advocacy goals while also working to shift the narrative towards care as an intersectional and crucial human right.



Care Economy Roadmap for Action in Asia and the Pacific



Expand the availability and use of disaggregated care data in official statistics. Advocating for the development of an internationally-agreed statistical framework on the care economy which could guide the identification of care indicators and priorities is a critical need for informing evidence-based decision making. This would go hand in hand with increased financing of large-scale nationally representative surveys and the integration of care on the agendas of national statistical systems, including measuring and valuing unpaid care via time-use surveys. It's also important to expand other forms of data and evidence in research – including qualitative and participatory research, and the collection of case studies to foster strategic storytelling that can connect statistics with the human story. This qualitative data is vital to capturing diverse voices from care workers and care receivers, and for shifting perceptions, norms, and priorities. Also important is identifying key indicators that can be applied across countries to document the 'state of the care economy,' which can inform regional frameworks and the development of national policies and action plans.

★ **Launch national-level organizing around care.** Several participants noted they planned to work toward domestic stakeholder mapping and coalition-building as groundwork for developing national care action plans that include the full spectrum of care services - childcare, eldercare, and disability care. **New funding modalities** are necessary to support local civil society engagement in the care economy at the national level, while also connecting researchers, practitioners and advocates at the national level with regional and global platforms for influence to build momentum for care policy reform.

★ **Expand and pilot innovative approaches to care policymaking and service provision,** such as through capacity building and technical assistance to women-owned and gender-responsive care enterprises. Also important is testing blended financing modalities for the spectrum of community-based, home-based and market-based models, including employer-supported care and fast growing digitized care platform businesses. New models for integrating care into trade policies, labor migration systems, and macroeconomic policies are also urgently needed.

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Increase domestic financing for care infrastructure and services. The **International Labour Organization (ILO) Care Policy Simulator** can support national evidence-based policy advocacy that promotes ‘a high-road’ to care by estimating care service gaps, and the costs and multiple returns. This includes employment and tax revenues associated with filling those gaps, which can fuel policy advocacy for care investments in care dialogues across the region. Particularly for low-income countries, continued **support from donor governments, the philanthropic, sector and the private sector** will be necessary to augment national investments in care systems, including protection frameworks and services for the growing numbers of migrant care workers.
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Increase international financial institutions (IFI) financing for innovation and scaling of care models. All G7 countries should contribute to the new World Bank **Invest in Childcare Initiative** as one way to spur action and concrete investment in care programs at the country level. Advocacy is also needed to encourage low-and middle-income countries to utilize this opportunity to build their care infrastructure, and ensure its implementation serves the needs of the most vulnerable and structurally excluded populations, and supports women’s economic empowerment. IFIs and the Asian Development Bank should also consider **establishing similar funds to support innovation in eldercare and disability care** to ensure donor funding is fostering a more holistic care agenda.
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Join the Global Alliance for Care (GAC) to increase regional information sharing, collaboration, and policy and financing commitments on care priorities and elevate Asia and Pacific perspectives at the global level. The GAC should establish regional working groups and foster dialogue across regions. GAC members from Asia and the Pacific - including governments, civil society groups, and private sector actors - should place a strong emphasis on catalyzing innovation, strategic dialogues, and new multi-stakeholder partnership models to collaborate and advocate for increased investments in the care economy in the region. GAC can build on momentum and coalitions formed such as through the Bali Care Economy Dialogue.






Advocate for care priorities to be included in India’s 2023 G20 priorities. Sumitra Mishra’s #ASPIRE4Care and the ILO’s 5R framework can help guide advocacy priorities across a range of regional stakeholders. Several organizations from the Dialogue are already collaborating to push for care commitments across the G20 engagement groups in India. Participants discussed the potential to host a dialogue across the Labor20 and Women20 engagement groups to discuss shared priorities around care, engage youth movements in India for changing gender paradigms around care, and leverage the triennial Women Deliver 2023 conference in Rwanda to amplify and reinforce care priorities at the G20, G7, and other global forums. Advocates should also keep a broader view to the G20 in **Brazil in 2024 and beyond** to ensure care is a durable priority across these annual transitions and includes input from Asia and Pacific stakeholders.



Encourage the U.S. to leverage its position as host of APEC in 2023 to foster information sharing and collaboration on care across Asia and the Pacific and Latin America, where care infrastructure is an established national and regional policy priority. The Biden Administration’s pioneering focus on the care economy and the opportunity afforded by the US hosting APEC this year offers an unprecedented opportunity to elevate care on this important regional forum.



Take advantage of this galvanizing moment for care globally by linking up care-focused regional dialogues. For example, stakeholders in Asia and the Pacific could connect with GIZ and UN Women’s care economy initiatives in the Middle East and North Africa to learn from and amplify those care initiatives to collectively advance global care commitments. Push for the ratification of key care-related conventions including C190 (concerning the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work) and C189 (domestic workers convention).



This overview and roadmap for action draws on the discussions and input among entities and individuals who participated in the Bali Care Economy Dialogue, but does not necessarily represent the views and position of all stakeholders.

Bali Care Economy Dialogue participants and contributors include: The Asia Foundation, UN Women Regional Office of Asia and the Pacific, International Center for Research on Women/WeProsper Coalition, Center for Global Development, International Development Research Center, Global Alliance for Care, Oxfam, US Secretary of State's Office of Global Women's Issues, US Agency for International Development, The Gender Lab, Pacific Disability Forum, Mobile Creches, SEWA Trust, ARROW, Intellectap, Minderoo Foundation, International Finance Corporation, American University, UNI Global Union, Government of Bangladesh, Government of Fiji, IWWAGE, Women's Funding Network, Disability Rights Fund, Inc., PKKK, International Domestic Workers Federation, ASEAN Secretariat, Sweef Capital, International Transport Workers' Federation, International Labour Organization, Fiji Women's Rights Movement, Philippine Commission on Women, Asian Development Bank, Kiddocare, Reproductive Health Association of Kelantan (REHAK), Monash University, PathFinders, Lovecare Indonesia, Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, ASEAN Training Centre for Social Work and Social Welfare, Women for Change, Center for Natural Resource Studies, Co-Impact, and the American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiatives (ABA ROLI).



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