

APEC Non-binding Care Compact

APEC Policy Partnership on Women and the Economy

May 2025



**Asia-Pacific
Economic Cooperation**



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APEC Non-binding Care Compact

The APEC Non-binding Care Compact sets out recommendations for supporting, valuing and promoting minimum standards for the care economy to strengthen and invest in the care economy and value paid and unpaid care.

Background

The Care Compact draws on a broad conception of the ‘care economy’.¹ The care economy can be defined as the total value of all paid and unpaid care work provided by people as part of human survival, welfare, reproducing the labour force.²

The care economy provides critical social infrastructure, essential for human development, well-being and the functioning of the economy. The Care Compact takes an expansive approach to the care economy, that includes direct and relational paid and unpaid care work for children, older adults and people with a disability,³ care for the land, environment and resources,⁴ care in disaster resilience,⁵ and a recognition of the caring responsibilities, relationships and contributions of Indigenous Peoples as appropriate.

The Compact recognises the dependence of all APEC economies on the care economy as a driver of economic growth, employment, and competitiveness, and emphasises the importance of creating a policy and regulatory environment conducive to supporting a robust and resilient care economy in the APEC region.

The historical and current undervaluing of the care economy is inextricably linked with the feminisation of care work. Both paid and unpaid care work in the care economy is overwhelmingly undertaken by women. It is also women who benefit most from the availability of paid care services, as they can facilitate greater workforce participation.⁶

The Care Compact underpins APEC efforts to support the proper valuation of paid and unpaid care work, encourage the redistribution of unpaid caring responsibilities, strengthen and invest in care economy jobs, and boost women’s workforce participation. These recommendations provide a

¹ In the Care Compact *unpaid care work* refers to the care work carried out within the household and broader community; *formal paid care work* refers to paid care work undertaken in the formal economy with access to labour and social protections; *informal paid care work* refers to paid care work undertaken outside the formal economy and may include paid work performed by domestic and migrant workers who do not have access to labour or social protections; *care recipients*, also known as care receivers, refers to those to whom paid or unpaid care is provided.

² UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (2022) [How to Invest in the Care Economy: A Primer](#), at 6.

³ ASEAN (2021) [Final ASEAN Comprehensive Framework on Care Economy](#), at 2.

⁴ UN Women (2023) [Unpacking the care society: Caring for people and the planet](#).

⁵ ASEAN (2021) [Final ASEAN Comprehensive Framework on Care Economy](#), at 4-5.

⁶ APEC Policy Support Unit (2022) [Unpaid Care and Domestic Work: Counting the Costs](#), at 2.

basis for resilient care economies with a strengthened ability to meet growing demands for care, including as a result of aging populations.

Acknowledging the diversity of APEC economies and the specific needs of members, APEC economies are encouraged to consider the following recommendations.

A. Overarching recommendations

1. Recognize a right to care, including through the provision of appropriate conditions for providing care, and ensuring the well-being of care-givers and care-receivers;
2. Recognize Indigenous caring responsibilities and relationships including cultural traditions and practices relating to care work;
3. Ensure a whole-of-government and whole-of-society collaboration to developing policies which support and leverage the care economy;
4. Support and invest in robust data and data capability for policy development and evaluation to better value and support the care economy, this includes establishing monitoring and accountability mechanisms to track progress on the implementation of care-related policies and commitments;
5. Undertake regular reporting and peer review among APEC economies can help identify best practices, areas for improvement, and opportunities for collaboration;
6. Recognize the participation of paid and unpaid care-givers and care-receivers, as well as training providers of care givers, to contribute to policy development.

B. Unpaid Care Work

1. Recognize the impact of social and cultural stereotypes in the uneven distribution of unpaid care work and the importance of survey data to inform governments about nature and extent of paid and unpaid care work undertaken by women and men;
2. Promote care provision as a shared responsibility between women and men, and support the shifting of social and cultural norms about the value of paid and unpaid care-giving;
3. Invest in awareness campaigns on the impact of the uneven distribution of unpaid care work, including creating incentives for men to share unpaid caring responsibilities, such as equalizing the allocation of paid parental leave for fathers;
4. Recognize care for the land and environment and in disaster resilience, in response to complex crises, as vital forms of unpaid care.

C. Paid Care Work

1. Promote the creation of skilled jobs, decent work and better pay in the formal and informal paid care economy;
2. Support decent work and equal pay for equal work or work of equal value for paid care workers in the formal and informal economy;
3. Ensure all paid care workers are covered by the same labour and social protection regulation as other workers in the economy and that labour and social protection is fully implemented and enforced;
4. Develop programmes that address any representation and decent work deficits among paid care workers;
5. Ensure decent working conditions and adequate social protection for migrant care workers and recognise the roles and responsibilities of care migrant-sending economies and care migrant-receiving economies;
6. Develop comprehensive capacity-building programs for caregivers, including training in specialized care techniques, mental health support, and resilience-building. Emphasis

should be placed on continuous professional development and creating career pathways within the care sector.

D. Employment-related care policies

1. Strengthen active labour market policies that provide greater access to the labour force and support women's participation on equal terms with men's participation;
2. Recognize the roles and contributions of people in the informal economy, including contributing family members, and the migrant and domestic workforce involved in care work and other broad sectors of informal work;
3. Support the extension of fair, non-discriminatory and equal employment conditions to women workers, including in the informal economy, to ensure access to decent work including, but not limited to: adequate earnings and productive work, decent working time, stability and security of work, equal opportunity and treatment in employment, safe work environment, access to social protection and representation;
4. Encourage formal contracts and decent work conditions in feminised sectors of employment, including for migrant workers and informal workers;
5. Support the provision of paid leave for women and men workers to meet their self-care needs in addition to their care responsibilities for young children, sick or older family members, or dependants with a disability;
6. Support the development of flexible working policies and family-friendly work arrangements at the workplace level that allow workers to combine paid work with caring responsibilities.

E. Care Infrastructure

1. Recognize, reduce, and redistribute unpaid care work through good labour market practices and investments in care infrastructure and social services;
2. Expand social care and institutional infrastructure, including schools, hospitals, care homes and housing, to ensure the well-being of underserved communities and people in vulnerable situations, including children, older, and people with disabilities;
3. Encourage workplaces to provide essential infrastructure to support care responsibilities, such as breastfeeding rooms and childcare centers in workplaces;
4. Expand the provision of universal affordable and quality early childhood care and education services to support women's workforce participation and the development and well-being of children;
5. Support the expansion of childcare-related leave policies, including paid maternity leave, and shared parental leave policies, creating incentives for fathers to share care;
6. Recognize the need to respond to the growing needs of ageing populations and persons with disability including through integrated long term-care services and community-based care and health services;
7. Consider allocating funding specifically for research and innovation in care practices, technologies, and methodologies;
8. Facilitate the establishment of peer support networks for caregivers to share experiences, resources, and strategies for self-care;
9. Consider approaches to implement gender equality responsive budgeting to ensure adequate institutional capacity to meet the care needs of women and to demonstrate the employment, economic and social returns from investment in the care economy;
10. Leverage and support the role of the care economy as a key contributor to the disaster resilience infrastructure for economy level and APEC region to support disaster management, including disaster risk identification and preparedness;
11. Encourage and support community-based care initiatives that empower local communities to develop and implement their own care solutions.

F. Care-related social protection

1. Endeavour to expand social protection such as cash transfers to support unpaid care responsibilities in low-income households including for children, and for sick, older and disabled persons;
2. Encourage/establish non-contributory social insurance schemes for women workers in vulnerable situations and women employed in the informal sector, such as migrant workers and domestic workers;
3. Connect social protection programmes to labour market activation and skill-building opportunities for women with care responsibilities wanting to (re)enter the workforce;
4. Facilitate cooperation to harmonize care standards, qualifications, and training programs as well as social protection for caregivers.

Annexure

The Care Compact reflects and reaffirms commitments in:

The [*APEC 2023 Leaders Declaration*](#) on care policies and investments in care infrastructure that address the unequal distribution in paid and unpaid care and domestic work and the [*APEC 2022 Leaders' Declaration*](#) which, recognizing the disproportionate impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on women, committed to pursue inclusive and sustainable economic policies that support recovery and growth through effective and equal participation in economies' activities and opportunities to contribute to economic recovery efforts;

The [*APEC 2023 Women and the Economy Forum Chair's Statement*](#) on building and investing in care infrastructure, including ensuring access to affordable and quality care for all, recognizing the value of care work and reducing and redistributing care work responsibilities; just, equitable, and decent work for the care workforce and care givers/providers across APEC economies; addressing gender-based violence (GBV) faced by women, including migrants, in the care workforce and care givers/providers when providing care in their homes, the homes of others, or other places; The principles and goals of the [*APEC Putrajaya Vision 2040*](#), supporting APEC economies to ensure that the Asia-Pacific region is resilient to shocks, crises, pandemics and other emergencies, by fostering quality growth that brings tangible benefits and greater health and wellbeing to all, including women and others with untapped economic potential;

Key action areas of the [*APEC La Serena Roadmap for Women and Inclusive Growth \(2019-2030\)*](#) focused on strengthening women's labour force participation and promoting decent employment for women in the formal care economy through policy interventions that improve households' access to quality care, whether paid or unpaid, direct or indirect, and to support formal and informal carers;

Policies set out in the [*APEC Embracing Carers Policy Toolkit*](#) that focus on protecting the rights of paid carers at home and at work in the formal or informal sectors and on ensuring quality care-giving jobs;

The Care Compact also acknowledges and is in line with broader efforts to recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work, such as:

[*UN Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality and empowerment of women*](#), including through recognizing and valuing unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family;

The UN Economic & Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) [*commitment to value and invest in the care economy*](#), including through the policy areas of care infrastructure; care-related social protection; care services; and employment-related care; and

The International Labour Organization's [*5R Framework for Decent Care Work: Achieving a high road to care work with gender equality*](#) through recognizing, reducing, and redistributing unpaid care work, and rewarding and representing paid

care work through promoting decent work for care workers and guaranteeing their representation, social dialogue and collective bargaining.