

The Climate and Care Initiative Chapeau Document

**Demonstrating that care
infrastructure is climate infrastructure:**
Evidence, innovation, and collective
action from the Global South

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On the cover:

What We Give, We Receive. These hills hold stories of care by those who tended the land before us and those who will follow. Every act of stewardship, returns as shade, rain, and life. To care for the earth is to honor those before us and safeguard those yet to come.

Amara Hub • Photo: Daniel Odongo • Lobalangit, Dodoth County, Northern Uganda

Introduction: The climate crisis is a care crisis

The climate crisis is a care crisis. Across the Global South, climate-related shocks and stresses such as droughts, floods, heat waves, biodiversity loss, food insecurity, water scarcity, displacement, and health emergencies are increasing the volume, intensity, and complexity of care work required to sustain households and communities. These impacts are not gender neutral. [UN Women](#) data shows that globally, women and girls perform nearly three times more unpaid care work than men, while [ILO data](#) shows that 708 million women remain outside the labour force because of unpaid care responsibilities. Climate change is amplifying these inequalities. Women and girls are often responsible for securing water, food, fuel, and care in contexts where environmental degradation and climate impacts make these tasks increasingly time-consuming and difficult. [Evidence shows](#) that in households without water on premises, women and girls are responsible for water collection in seven out of ten households worldwide.

The relationship between [climate change and care is multidimensional](#). [Research shows](#) that climate change increases care demands through the worsening health outcomes of individuals, increased incidences of food and water insecurity and displacement, and livelihood losses. At the same time, climate change weakens formal and informal care systems by damaging infrastructure, straining public resources, and eroding community support networks. [Emerging evidence](#) further suggests that climate change may push up to 158 million additional women and girls into poverty by 2050, highlighting the urgency of addressing the structural links between gender inequality, care, and climate vulnerability.

Yet care work, care systems, and collective forms of social organization are critical sources of climate resilience and adaptation. Around the world, women's organizations, Indigenous communities, grassroots movements, and ecofeminist initiatives are already developing solutions that simultaneously protect ecosystems, strengthen social cohesion, sustain livelihoods, and support adaptation in the face of climate change. These experiences challenge dominant approaches that treat care as peripheral to climate action. Instead, they demonstrate that care functions as essential infrastructure that enables people, communities, and ecosystems to adapt and thrive in the face of climate change.

Yet, despite the central role that care plays in sustaining people, communities, and ecosystems in the face of climate change, there has been limited evidence, investment, and policy attention to position care as a form of climate infrastructure and a cornerstone of effective climate action, climate policies, and climate finance.

Recognizing this, the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) launched the Climate and Care Initiative in 2023. It was among the first Global South-focused efforts explicitly connecting care, climate action, gender equality, and just transitions.

The Climate and Care Initiative was structured around four interconnected pillars, which are highlighted here and discussed in further detail in the following section. First, it supported the development of a [shared conceptual framework](#) on the climate-care nexus through a participatory process involving more than 70 researchers, care advocates, and climate experts. Second, it established the Climate and Care Fund, supporting 23 grassroots

Previous page: For rural women in northwestern Córdoba, care work encompasses caring for animals, collecting and transporting water, and protecting native forests. These responsibilities are increasing during periods of drought and extreme heat experienced as a result of climate change.

Movimiento Nacional Campesino Indígena Somos Tierra • Photo: Natalia Roca
Comunidad de Los Escalones- Córdoba- Argentina



Participants in the **Fundación Futuro Latinoamericano (FFLA) project** led by Kichwa women. The project leveraged ancestral knowledge to support climate resilience.

organizations across Latin America, the Caribbean, and Sub-Saharan Africa working at the intersection of care and climate action. Third, working together with the fund's grantees, the initiative generated participatory action research to visibilize, recognize, and strengthen grassroots and ecofeminist initiatives. Finally, it promoted policy engagement and knowledge mobilization to connect local experiences with national and global climate debates, including UNFCCC processes and discussions on adaptation, resilience, climate finance, and just transitions. Together, these efforts seek

to position care as climate infrastructure and advance evidence-based pathways toward more gender-just, resilient, and sustainable futures.

The Climate and Care Initiative sought not only to document these relationships, but to generate evidence, strengthen locally-led solutions, and position care as an essential component of climate resilience, adaptation, and advancing a just transition.

Overview: The Climate and Care Initiative - a pioneering project linking the climate crisis and the care crisis

Collective Actions for Collective Wellbeing. Climate impacts in agriculture have increased care work for women. Unpredictable climate patterns have resulted in low productivity of food crops in the rural communities. Collective actions by women to adopt climate-resilient crops contribute to household food security, which reduces the risk of health-related complications as a result of increased care work.

Siaya Muungano Network • Photo: Kevin Wamaya • Mudurme Village, Siaya County, Kenya

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The Climate and Care Initiative was created to address a critical gap between the climate agenda and the care agenda. The initiative is grounded in the recognition that the climate crisis directly affects the amount of care required, how care is provided, organized, and experienced, while care systems themselves are essential for building resilient communities, supporting climate adaptation, and enabling a just transition. By explicitly connecting these two agendas, the initiative seeks to advance more equitable and effective responses to climate change while promoting gender justice and community wellbeing.

The initiative is implemented by a consortium composed of Fundación Avina, Oxfam Canada, the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), the National University of San Martín (UNSAM), and the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits University), in collaboration with the Global Alliance for Care and with support from Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the Værekraft Foundation.

The Climate and Care Initiative was structured around four interconnected milestones. The first focused on developing a common understanding of the relationship between climate change and care through participatory and interdisciplinary research processes, led by UNRISD. A shared conceptual framework was developed based on a literature review with input from grassroots organizations, communities, researchers, and practitioners from Latin America, the Caribbean, and Sub-Saharan Africa. The framework highlights how climate impacts increase care needs and burdens, particularly for women and marginalized populations.

The second milestone focused on mapping and financing solutions and was led by Fundación Avina. Through extensive outreach and engagement processes, the initiative identified innovative community-led responses operating at the intersection of climate action, care, and gender equality. This work resulted in the creation of the Climate and Care Initiative Fund, a dedicated funding mechanism designed to strengthen locally led solutions that address both the climate and care crises.

The Climate and Care Initiative Chapeau Document

What makes the Climate and Care Initiative unique?



Explicitly connects care and climate



Funds grassroots organizations



Works across Latin America, the Caribbean, and Sub-Saharan Africa



Combines project funding, research, and advocacy



Centres Global South leadership



Brings together actors across feminist, labour, climate, and local movements



Our Future is in Our Present Actions. Human activities exacerbate climate impacts in our local ecosystems. Local communities depend on resources from the existing ecosystems. Climate impacts on the ecosystems increase the vulnerability of the local community to unforeseen health conditions, intensifying the need for more care responsibilities. Recognizing the contribution of our local ecosystems to our present and future health is in our collective actions.

Siaya Muungano Network • Photo: Kevin Wamaya • Kombo Beach, Siaya County, Kenya

The third milestone centered on developing evidence and generating learning from funded initiatives and broader experiences in the field. UNSAM (Latin America) and Wits University (Africa) led the participatory action research (PAR) activities, documentation processes, case studies, and knowledge generation efforts aimed at increasing understanding of the climate-care nexus on the ground. Working alongside the fund grantees, the PAR activities seek to raise awareness and recognition of grassroots initiatives working on the frontlines of climate change and care work. This evidence has helped strengthen the conceptual and practical foundations of integrating care into climate policy and programming.

The fourth milestone focused on informing and engaging in key climate policy processes through coordinated advocacy and knowledge-sharing efforts. The initiative developed a comprehensive advocacy strategy aimed at positioning care as a critical component of climate resilience, adaptation, mitigation, and just transition policies. Working alongside the fund grantees, members of the advisory committee, consortium partners, and strategic allies, the initiative engaged in numerous local, national, regional, and global discussions on climate and care.

The Climate and Care Initiative Fund received an overwhelming response, attracting more than 1,200 applications from grassroots organizations, NGOs, social movements, and community-based groups across priority countries in Latin America, the Caribbean, and Sub-Saharan Africa. Following a rigorous selection process, 23 organizations were awarded grants, including 11 organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean and 12 organizations in Sub-Saharan Africa. Through a total allocation of USD 600,000, selected organizations received grants of up to USD 50,000 to implement projects over a period of up to 14 months.

Funded projects address different elements of the intersecting care and climate crises, across a range of contexts, communities, and geographies – from rural Indigenous communities integrating traditional knowledge with emerging technology to develop community-based solutions to respond to climate risks, to healthcare workers in urban environments leveraging action-based learning to identify solutions to the occupational hazards created by the climate crisis. Below is a list of funded projects – background information on all projects can be found here.

Overview

Organization	Project	Countries
Africa		
Organisation Solidaire pour le Développement Humain Intégral (OSDHI) Caritas Bondoukou	Strengthening Care Systems and Climate Resilience in Two Rural Communities in the Bounkani Region of Northeastern Côte d'Ivoire	Côte d'Ivoire
Public Services International LBG	Supporting Health and Care Workers for Climate Resilience in Ghana	Ghana
Inclusion Africa	Adaptive Futures: Climate and Care for People with Intellectual Disabilities in Africa	Kenya, Ghana and Zanzibar
Siaya Muungano Network (SIMUN)	Caring for Carers, Mobilizing Support to Build the Resilience of Rural Older Women in Climate Emergency	Kenya
Sauti Salama	Integrating Care and Climate for Gender Based Violence Prevention in Kenya	Kenya
Youth and Urbanism Community-Based Organization	Climate and Care for Her: Strengthening Resilience for Women in Urban Slums	Kenya
Galore Public Health Initiatives	The Benue Women Driving Climate Resilience in Agriculture (BWDCRiA) project	Nigeria
Transparency and Accountability in Totality Initiative (TinT-FollowTaxes)	Empowering Women Care Workers in Vulnerable Communities for Climate Resilience and Adaptation in Kaduna and Taraba State	Nigeria
Asiye eTafuleni	Growing urban informal workers' climate change resilience through developing change agents: a model for building advocacy capacity and distributing community care responsibilities	South Africa
Amara Hub	Community-led Action for Resilient Ecosystems and Shared Caregiving (CARES)	Uganda

Overview





Organization	Project	Countries
Action for women and Awakening in Rural Environment Uganda (AWARE Uganda)	Improving care work affected by climate change impacts in Kaabong Karamoja Region	Uganda
Vendors Initiative for Social and Economic Transformation (VISET)	Informal Economy's Action for Climate and Care Initiative (IEACCI)	Zimbabwe
Latin America and the Caribbean		
Asociación Civil el Amanecer de los Cartoneros	Between Caring and Recycling: Women, Children, and the Climate Challenge	Argentina
El Chañar-Asociación civil al servicio del Movimiento Nacional Campesino Indígena Somos Tierra	Recognition of the Role of Rural and Indigenous Women in Life Care and Climate Change Mitigation	Argentina
Laboratório do Observatório do Clima	Expansion of the "Defensoras por Defensoras" Program	Brazil
Instituto de Ação para o Desenvolvimento Sustentável do Sul do Amazonas – ASA	Women and Climate: Challenges and Solutions for Care and Climate Adaptation in the Legal Amazon	Brazil
Fundación Barranquilla+20	Women Caregivers for Life and Climate Justice in Colombia and Abya Yala	Colombia
Red Juvenil de Derechos Humanos	Community Action for Resilience, Equality and Sustainability (CARES)	Colombia
Fundación Internacional para la Promoción del Desarrollo Sustentable Futuro Latinoamericano (FFLA). (FFLA is the fiscal sponsor of the Mariscal Sucre community organization)	Kichwa Communities for Climate and Care	Ecuador



Organization	Project	Countries
Fundación Social Cultural	Water Restoration and Community Resilience: Cariacu River Micro-watershed	Ecuador
Mujer y Medio Ambiente, A.C.	Territories in Transformation: Contributions from Rural and Urban Communities to Connect Climate Change and Care	Mexico
Centro de Derechos de la Mujer de Chiapas A.C.	Care and Sustainability: Redistributing Care Work and Protecting the Environment in Tseltal and Ch'ol Indigenous Territories	Mexico
Socios en Salud	Strengthening Climate-Resilient Caregiving for Early Childhood Development in Ventanilla	Peru

In terms of advocacy, a key objective has been to elevate the voices and experiences of communities and organizations from the Global South and create opportunities for their participation in international climate spaces, including the annual United Nations Conference of the Parties (COP) climate conference, the United Nations annual Conference on the Status of Women, the June meetings of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and global forums like Women Deliver. Efforts have focused on increasing recognition of the climate-care nexus within climate policy discussions, while fostering dialogue among governments, civil society organizations, researchers, feminist movements, and international stakeholders.

Throughout its implementation, the initiative has benefited from the guidance of an advisory committee, which has provided strategic feedback, strengthened connections with relevant policy and knowledge spaces, and contributed to continuous learning and improvement across all project components.

Together, these activities have positioned the Climate and Care Initiative as a pioneering effort to demonstrate that care is a fundamental pillar of climate justice, resilience, and sustainable development. By combining research and knowledge generation, funding, and advocacy, the initiative has helped build a growing global movement working to ensure that care becomes an integral part of climate action and policy.

3

Case studies: Evidence from the ground

Case Studies

To enhance visibility, recognition, and foster learning about the climate-care nexus, the initiative supported 23 applied research projects across 14 countries in Latin America, the Caribbean, and Sub-Saharan Africa, with a critical focus on ecofeminist and Indigenous movements. Below we synthesize key findings about the climate-care nexus across each of these regions, demonstrating both the scale of the challenge faced and the solutions that are being developed in response.

Latin America and the Caribbean

Across Latin America and the Caribbean, climate change is causing extreme heat, drought, forest fires, loss of biodiversity, glacial retreat, and floods. At the same time, industrial activities, like mining, are adding to the crisis by depleting critical water resources.

As the environment degrades, so too does wellbeing. Floods bring mold into homes, contaminate water sources, and block key transportation routes. Extreme heat increases the risk of forest fires and drought, and it further enhances the spread of vector-borne diseases like dengue fever.

When people become ill due to climate-related stressors, when additional labour is required to collect water because of drought, and when community resources are needed to protect Indigenous crops, it is almost certainly not governments that are providing or funding solutions. Instead, it's women and girls who serve as the invisible infrastructure, filling the deficit left by underfunded public services and ensuring that both people and the planet remain protected. As women and girls fill this space vacated by the state, they are effectively providing a "gender subsidy." The provision of

Across regions it remains clear: climate change increases care needs, undermines the conditions for providing care, and care systems support resilience, adaptation, and recovery. Therefore, it's worth reinforcing – the climate crisis and the care crisis cannot be separated. Care systems are climate infrastructure.

this subsidy comes at a cost – the additional burden of care means women pay for the climate crisis through their time, labour, and wellbeing.

The Climate and Care Initiative supported 11 projects across six countries in Latin America and the Caribbean including Colombia, Peru, Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, and Ecuador. **Projects reinforced the inextricable link between the climate crisis and the global crisis in care, each putting stress on the boundaries of the planet, and on women and girls who absorb the majority of the burden related to care.**

All projects highlighted solutions that enhance resilience to key challenges at the heart of the climate-care nexus. These projects demonstrate that care systems are climate infrastructure and that women are not simply absorbing the impacts of climate change – they are leading adaptation, restoring ecosystems, protecting livelihoods, managing risk, and developing local solutions to climate vulnerability. Highlights from the funded projects include:

Previous page: **Fundación Barranquilla+20** brought together 100 young women, elders, and territorial defenders to position care as essential for climate resilience.



The **Red Juvenil de Derechos Humanos** project aims to support climate resilience and gender equality in Indigenous communities in Colombia.

Climate, care, and the intersection of traditional knowledge and technology for disaster risk management.

Organization: Red Juvenil de Derechos Humanos

Location: Nariño, Colombia

Climate change is having an immense impact on the Andean community of Nariño – specifically, heavy rainfall is increasing flooding and landslides. There is a notable lack of state capacity in the region to respond should disaster strike, in addition to a systemic exclusion of women in political decision-making, impeding their ability to drive resources to their community.

Indigenous women are stepping in to fill the gaps left by the state, transforming the community from a passive recipient of disaster response into an active manager of climate risk – one where women are self-recognized as “guardians of the territory.” Through a process they have dubbed the “Dialogue of Knowledge (Diálogo de Saberes),” Indigenous women are combining local knowledge, ancestral memory, drones, and cartographic tools to build early-warning systems and design routes that will allow children, the elderly, and disabled to safely evacuate the community in the face of flooding or landslides.

By embedding care and gender perspectives into climate adaptation and disaster risk management efforts, this project addresses systemic barriers that have limited Indigenous women’s participation in responding to the climate crisis, while further strengthening community autonomy and preserving and utilizing traditional knowledge alongside emerging technology.

Case Studies

Leveraging care and community for climate mitigation and economic development

Organization: Asociación Civil el Amanecer de los Cartoneros

Location: Argentina

Argentina’s Matanza–Riachuelo basin is a 2,000–square–kilometer watershed that is home to millions and covers the country’s largest metropolis, Buenos Aires. The Matanza River, which runs through the watershed, is the most polluted in Latin America. With the high levels of pollution, there is a large informal economy of waste pickers in the basin who remove solid waste that can be recycled.

In response to this intersection of climate crisis, toxic vulnerability, and a population of women and children in need of support in the Matanza–Riachuelo basin, the organization El Amanecer de Los Cartoneros has deployed an integrated strategy that connects recycling with community care, serving more than 95 women and 175 children, enabling women to generate livelihoods by freeing up time that would have previously been dedicated to care. These

community care groups, or “canteros,” provide a comprehensive care model that ensures safe environments, provides healthy meals, and delivers health monitoring for children. Women receive training in labor rights and community management, promoting autonomy and improved working conditions. The initiative integrates care, climate, and labor justice, and is grounded in partnerships with cooperatives and municipalities to ensure long-term sustainability and impact.

By providing essential childcare, this project allows women to lead the recovery of tonnes of waste, directly mitigating emissions, reducing the region’s carbon footprint, and providing a means of economic support for families. This community–managed system serves as a vital social buffer, protecting the health of the next generation while enabling the “green labour” required for urban climate adaptation. Ultimately, the model redistributes the burden of care from individual households to community infrastructure, creating the conditions necessary for women to participate in paid and environmentally beneficial work.

The **Asociación Civil el Amanecer de los Cartoneros** project provided support to 175 children, enabling their mothers to participate in economic opportunities.





Sub-Saharan Africa

Across Africa, the climate crisis is having devastating effects on the ways that people live, work, and care for themselves and their families. Africa is warming faster than the global average, contributing to drought, biodiversity loss, and heat stress. Rainfall patterns have become extreme. In the past 10 years, there has been a surge in heavy rainfall and widespread flooding. In 2024 alone, flooding across Africa affected approximately 11 million people. In addition to the dual extremes of flooding and drought, heavy industries like mining are putting additional pressure on Africa's already scarce water resources.

These environmental changes are intensifying and compounding existing vulnerabilities including inequality, gender disparities, and chronic poverty, all of which amplify the complexity and severity of the development challenges that the continent already faces.

Woven into the climate crisis is a growing crisis of care. This crisis in care is driven by the systemic undervaluing of care work, the financialization of care, and the decline in public support for affordable and high-quality care. This crisis is particularly prevalent in Sub-Saharan Africa, where the ILO estimates that women and girls spend approximately 3.4 times more time on unpaid care work than men, subsidizing the role of the state in the provision of care work. This gender subsidy reflects the same subsidy that women and girls provide in Latin America and the Caribbean. As the climate crisis intensifies, there is no doubt that the demand for both unpaid and paid care will rise. This includes things like caring for the sick, older persons, and securing water, food and fuel for the household.

The Climate and Care Initiative supported 12 projects across seven countries in Sub-Saharan Africa including Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, and Uganda. As in Latin America and the Caribbean, all projects reinforced the dual crisis of climate change and care, highlighted how the

two are intertwined, **and reinforced that care systems are climate infrastructure**. Projects in Sub-Saharan Africa were focused across three key themes – how care influences climate adaptation and disaster response, the impact of the climate crisis on vulnerable populations, including those with disabilities, and how the climate and care crisis is manifesting in rural regions.

The case studies demonstrate how climate change is intensifying existing care inequalities, with women and frontline care workers absorbing a disproportionate share of the burden. At the same time, they show how community-led care infrastructure, worker organizing, social protection, and the redistribution of care can enhance resilience, economic autonomy, and climate adaptation efforts.

Highlights from the projects include:

Supporting unionized healthcare workers in the face of extreme heat and flooding

Organization: Public Services International

Location: Accra, Ghana

The climate crisis is manifesting in Accra – Ghana's main economic centre – on a number of fronts, including through extreme heat and increases in severe flooding. Flooding increases the risk of water and vector-borne diseases like cholera and malaria in addition to impeding travel within the city. Extreme heat caused Ghana to lose more than 5 billion hours of labour in 2023.

These stressors brought on by the climate crisis are amplifying the care crisis in hospitals across the city, placing the formal care system under pressure and threatening the safety of healthcare workers and their ability to provide essential patient care. For example, floods damage hospitals and make transit to them impossible, while extreme heat puts hospital employees in danger via dehydration and exhaustion.



The **Public Services International** project in Accra, Ghana sought to improve the working conditions of healthcare workers where occupational hazards were worsened by climate impacts.

Public Services International is working alongside key unions representing Accra's healthcare workers to help healthcare workers build resilience and improve working conditions in the face of climate change.

Through an action-based learning approach, the project engages workers in identifying solutions to occupational hazards worsened or created by climate impacts. It conducts risk assessments, provides training, and supports advocacy for better working conditions and worker protection policies. The project also builds the sector's capacity to manage climate-related health challenges like vector-borne diseases, ensuring workers' voices shape climate and health policies for more equitable, sustainable, and climate-sensitive systems.

Ultimately, this case demonstrates that resilient care systems depend on protecting the workers who provide care – so effectively responding to the climate crisis means building solutions that keep the occupational health and safety of workers at the centre.

Strengthening Uganda's care economy in the face of drought

Organization: AWARE

Location: Uganda

In East Africa, drought is the most significant impact of the climate crisis at present. In Uganda, Karamoja sits at the epicenter of the drought crisis. Already, Karamoja is classified as one of the poorest regions in the world. Drought is putting extreme pressure on food security in the region – crops are yielding less, food stocks are decreasing, land is being degraded, and water is becoming scarcer. The health impacts of drought include malnutrition, maternal health risks, and an increase in the spread of waterborne diseases.

The climate crisis in Uganda is further exacerbating the already existing care crisis, putting pressure on Uganda's already overstretched care economy. The intersection of environmental degradation, food insecurity, and poverty has increased unpaid care work, with women bearing the primary costs of resource collection and household survival.



The burden of care in Uganda is incredibly high, with 45 percent of the population under 14, and a large portion of the population living with disabilities. Care work in Uganda is disproportionately carried out by women and girls, and employment legislation does not recognize the domestic workers who are caring for others – many working more than 70 hours per week – meaning that much of the care work is unregulated and lacks social protection. Climate vulnerability is therefore further compounded by the absence of labour and social protection for domestic workers.

To support domestic workers and women and girls carrying the burden of care that's been worsened by climate change, AWARE has launched programming that addresses the impacts of the climate and care crises on several fronts. The initiative integrates climate-smart agriculture through education, strengthening food security. It trains men and boys in caregiving roles to strengthen caregiving systems. The project also provides entrepreneurship and Village Savings and Loan Association training for women. Finally, it promotes local policy advocacy, enhancing women's mobility and autonomy, and supporting women's leadership in care and climate decision-making for long-term resilience and equity.

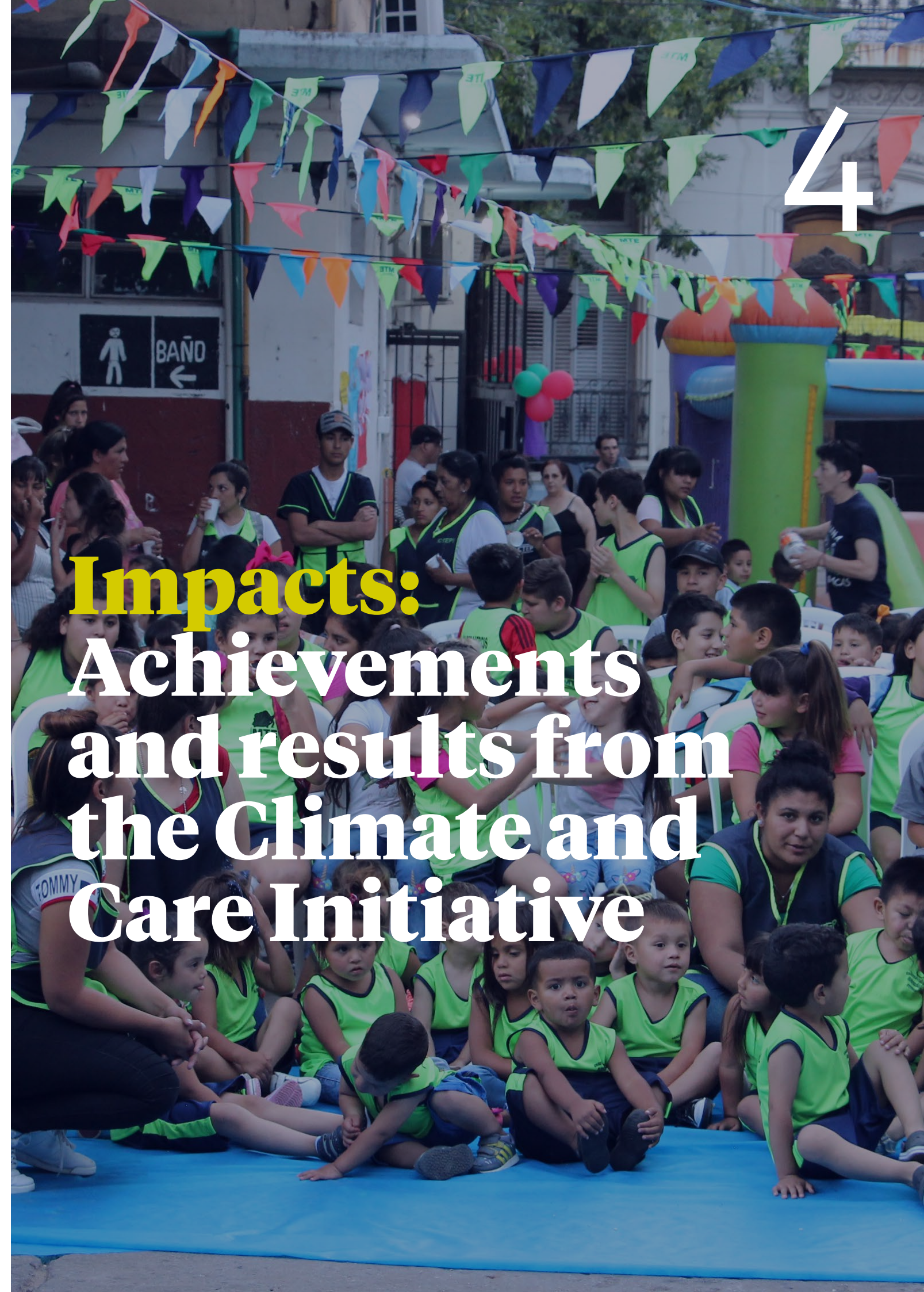
This initiative demonstrates that responding to the dual climate and care crises requires transforming the systems that organize and value care, redistribute unpaid care responsibilities, strengthen social protection, and ensure that women have the necessary autonomy to shape adaptation strategies.



Nakiru ann attending to her garden with irrigation from a mini pond in Lolelia kaabong, Uganda..

Aware Uganda • Photo by Lopote sam • School lane Road, Kaabong Town council, Kaabong District.

Next page: The **Asociación Civil el Amanecer de los Cartoneros** supported five childcare centres in communities in Argentina, providing a means of economic support for families via recycling and reducing waste in the region.



Impacts: Achievements and results from the Climate and Care Initiative



The Climate and Care Initiative achieved a great deal over the course of the project – from building the evidence and knowledge base on the climate–care nexus, to supporting locally-led solutions and strengthening capacities in the Global South, to bringing the climate–care nexus into critical policy discussions at all levels of government.

Across its research, funding and advocacy, the initiative further contributed to important changes in how climate and care are understood, how local solutions are developed and supported, and how care is reflected in climate policy and practice.

Specific highlights and achievements from the initiative further include those related to the generation of knowledge and evidence, the localized impact of funded programs across the Global South, advancing advocacy on the climate–care nexus, and building ecosystems that will continue to carry critical action forward.

Knowledge and evidence: Changing how we understand climate and care

Achievement: A new framework for understanding climate and care. The Initiative developed a participatory Climate–Care Nexus Conceptual Framework, drawing on the knowledge and experiences of feminist movements, community organizations, researchers and other experts from the Global South.

The framework provides a common language for understanding how climate change and care interact and introduces a “climate–care nexus prism” for bringing care into climate action. It builds on the 5 Rs of care—recognize, reduce, redistribute, reward and represent – and adds a focus on resilience and resources.

A fundamental shift: care is climate infrastructure

Perhaps the initiative’s most important overarching achievement was to strengthen recognition of care systems as climate infrastructure. Climate change increases care needs and can intensify the unequal burden of unpaid care. At the same time, care systems are critical to helping people withstand, adapt to, and recover from climate shocks. The initiative has demonstrated why climate action cannot be designed, financed or implemented without considering care.

The framework has since been used to inform research, monitoring, advocacy and policy discussions, including at regional and global climate and women’s rights forums.

Result: Care has moved from the margins toward the centre of climate resilience discussions. The initiative helped change the way the relationship between climate and care is understood. Rather than treating care as a separate policy issue, it helped establish a broader understanding of care as essential infrastructure for climate resilience and a just transition.

The project also helped shift the question from simply asking how climate change affects women to asking who sustains life when public services and environmental systems are disrupted, under what conditions, and with what resources. This framing has gained traction in national, regional and global policy spaces, helping establish the climate–care nexus as a legitimate area of climate policy and advocacy. The initiative’s engagement at global forums, including COP29, COP30 and the Commission on the Status of Women, further strengthened this narrative.

Achievement: New evidence generated from community experience: Research and action across the 23 initiatives generated strong evidence that care is climate infrastructure. The projects demonstrated that climate impacts—such as drought, flooding, heat, water scarcity and environmental degradation – can increase care responsibilities and deepen existing inequalities. At the same time projects highlighted that community care systems, local knowledge, and care practices are critical to helping people adapt and build resilience. Finally, the evidence highlighted that simply increasing women’s participation in climate action is not enough. If participation adds to women’s existing responsibilities, it can deepen rather than reduce inequality.

Result: Community knowledge is increasingly valued. The initiative helped demonstrate the value of locally generated knowledge and lived experience in understanding the climate–care nexus and developing effective responses. A significant learning from the initiative was that many of the solutions needed to respond to climate and care challenges already exist within communities. The role of the project was not to create these solutions from scratch, but to help communities and organizations document, strengthen, connect, and bring greater visibility to these already existing solutions.

Achievement: A growing body of public knowledge. The Climate and Care Initiative has generated a corpus of new knowledge, evidence, policy papers, and other knowledge products, all

of which can found [here](#). Publications include a policy brief, written in collaboration with the Asia Foundation, building out the body of research and evidence on the climate–care nexus, as well as a working paper presenting the conceptual framework developed by the initiative. A full list of publications is shared in the Annex.

Result: The evidence base to support advocacy on the climate–care nexus has been strengthened. Together, these products provide advocates, researchers, policymakers and funders with a stronger evidence base for understanding the climate–care nexus and making the case for care-responsive climate action.

Local capacity: Strengthening locally-led climate solutions

Achievement: Supporting 23 locally-led initiatives in 14 countries: Through the Catalytic Fund, the initiative supported 23 organizations in 14 countries, exceeding its original target of 20 initiatives. More than 1,100 proposals were received, demonstrating strong demand for investment in locally led climate and care solutions.

The projects supported a remarkable diversity of approaches, including:

- climate-resilient agriculture and agroecology;
- water and sanitation solutions;
- clean energy and efficient cooking;
- community disaster preparedness and early-warning systems;
- climate-resilient health and care services;
- childcare and care infrastructure;
- support for informal workers;
- protection and leadership of environmental defenders;
- Indigenous and community-led approaches to environmental stewardship; and
- advocacy for stronger care, climate and social protection policies.





The fund went beyond grantmaking. Organizations received research and technical support, opportunities for peer learning, documentation and support to bring their experiences into policy and advocacy spaces.

Result: Local organizations are better equipped to develop and advocate for solutions that address the challenges of the climate–care nexus. The initiative strengthened the capacity of participating organizations to generate evidence from their own experiences, organize within their communities, develop practical responses, and engage decision-makers. It also created opportunities for organizations across the Global South to learn from one another, helping to connect solutions that might otherwise have remained isolated. The more than 1,100 proposals received in response to the fund also revealed significant unmet demand for investment in locally led approaches to climate and care.

Achievement: Supporting women and marginalized communities to lead climate solutions: Across the portfolio, women strengthened their participation in community decision-making, cooperatives, trade unions, and climate advocacy. In Ghana, 403 of 769 participants in one project’s action-based learning program were women, who took on roles as facilitators, organizers and union representatives. In Uganda, women gained greater recognition for their contributions to agriculture and care and increased their leadership in cooperatives and community groups.

Result: Women and marginalized communities are increasingly recognized as agents of climate action. The initiative contributed to a shift away from seeing women and marginalized communities primarily as vulnerable groups and toward recognizing them as leaders, knowledge producers and innovators. This was particularly important for groups whose experiences are often overlooked in mainstream climate policy—including Indigenous communities, informal workers, older women, and people with disabilities.



Transparency and Accountability in Totality Initiative (TinT-FollowTaxes). Women in rural regions of Nigeria spend up to 5 hours daily on water and firewood collection, childcare and food preparation tasks directly impacted by climate change. The TinT-Follow Taxes project sought to empower women in rural communities in Nigeria.

Impacts

Policy and advocacy: Turning evidence into influence

Achievement: Connecting local evidence to policymaking: The initiative connected community-generated evidence to decision-making at local, national, regional and global levels. Participating organizations generated policy recommendations, engaged decisionmakers and brought community perspectives into policy processes.

Result: Care is better reflected in climate policies and institutional processes. Some concrete examples of project partners influencing climate policy and institutional processes include:

- **Uganda:** care was incorporated into six regional climate plans.
- **Nigeria:** two state governments incorporated care work into their climate plans.
- **Zimbabwe:** evidence contributed to municipal budget processes, including proposals for care infrastructure.
- **Ghana:** climate risks affecting health and care workers were incorporated into collective bargaining agreements for two unions.
- **Colombia:** project partners contributed to the country’s Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC).
- **Colombia:** community risk mapping and early-warning work generated evidence for future formal disaster-risk protocols.
- **Brazil:** women environmental defenders brought their priorities into international climate advocacy.

These examples demonstrate an important shift: evidence generated by communities is reaching decision-making spaces and beginning to influence policies, plans, budgets and workers’ rights.



Achievement: Elevating the climate–care nexus in global policy spaces. The Initiative engaged in major international and regional policy forums, including meetings at the UN’s Conference of the Parties and Commission on the Status of Women, UNFCCC meetings, and regional climate and women’s rights forums. Through the initiative, strategies and materials were developed to support advocacy, including key messages and data, stakeholder maps, and communications assets.

Result: The climate–care nexus has greater visibility and legitimacy in international debates. The initiative helped establish climate and care as a connected policy agenda within international climate and gender discussions. The Care Pavilion at COP30 and engagement at CSW70, for example, helped reinforce the message that care systems are essential to climate resilience, that a just transition requires investment in social infrastructure and redistribution of care, and that Global South leadership is essential to transforming climate governance.

Ecosystem building: creating relationships that can sustain the work

Achievement: Building cross-regional ecosystems for climate and care action: Perhaps one of the initiative’s most important achievements is the community and institutional ecosystem it helped build. The project connected grassroots organizations, feminist movements, Indigenous leaders, researchers, universities, trade unions, governments, funders and international policy actors across Latin American and the Caribbean and Sub-Saharan Africa. It created opportunities for peer learning, exchange, collaboration and joint advocacy, while connecting local experiences with regional and global policy spaces.

Impacts



Result: A stronger and more connected community of actors carrying the agenda forward. The initiative strengthened relationships and networks that extend beyond individual projects and organizations. In Brazil, for example, the “Defensoras por Defensoras” programme reached 40 women environmental defenders across approximately 40 localities, supported 15 initiatives and strengthened an ongoing network for exchange, training, and communication. Other projects established or strengthened community structures, and established networks of local change agents.

The initiative therefore leaves more than a collection of reports and completed projects. It leaves behind a shared framework, new evidence, strengthened organizations, practical tools, networks and relationships, and a growing community of actors working to integrate care into climate action.

Youth and Urbanism Community Based Organization. Participants from Youth and Urbanism share experiences from the project. In Kenya, women and girls spend 3–5 more times on unpaid care than men, a disparity impacted by climate shocks.

A lasting legacy: changing the way climate action is understood and delivered

Taken together, the achievements of the Climate and Care Initiative have contributed to a broader shift in the climate conversation. The initiative has helped demonstrate that care is not an additional consideration to be added to climate considerations – care is indeed fundamental to climate resilience and a just transition. The initiative has highlighted that care systems and care workers are essential to community resilience, that women and marginalized communities are not only affected by climate change but are already leading solutions, and that locally generated evidence is necessary to influence global policy. The initiative has also put a spotlight on the importance of flexible funding, locally led action, research partnerships, peer learning and advocacy in bringing these solutions to scale and into policy.

The work is not finished. The next challenge is to build on this foundation by turning growing recognition of the climate–care nexus into sustained investment, stronger care infrastructure, better redistribution of unpaid care work, and climate policies that systematically account for care.



From learning to action: Recommendations and next steps

Participants from the Fundación Social Cultural project in Ecuador join hands. The project promotes ecological restoration and gender-responsive community resilience in northern Ecuador's Cariacu micro-watershed.



The initiative demonstrated that climate action is stronger when it recognizes and invests in care. It showed that communities already hold many of the solutions needed for a just climate transition – and that flexible funding, research partnerships, learning and advocacy can help these solutions gain visibility and influence.

But it also highlighted the work still ahead. Recognition alone is not enough. The next step is to turn recognition into greater redistribution of care, investment in care infrastructure, stronger public services, decent work and sustained climate finance, so that climate resilience does not continue to depend disproportionately on the unpaid labour of women and communities. Here we share key policy recommendations as well as suggested next steps that will ensure the momentum that has been achieved to date can be sustained.

Policy recommendations

Recommendations presented here come from the full spectrum of project partners – across academia, government, international institutions, and civil society – and directly from project grantees in Latin America, the Caribbean, and Sub-Saharan Africa, ensuring that grassroots and community perspectives are represented. Recommendations are grouped by those targeting national and local governments, global donors – including those funding climate finance – and those targeting philanthropic funders.

Local and national governments

Integrate care into climate policy:

Given the inextricable link between them, climate policies, strategies, and funding mechanisms should integrate care as fulsomely as possible. For example, care work and care systems should be reflected across Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), National Adaptation Plans

(NAPs), long-term strategies, disaster risk reduction plans, health adaptation plans, loss and damage frameworks, just transition plans, and climate finance proposals. Climate planning, budgeting, monitoring, and finance mechanisms should assess and address impacts on caregivers, care workers, unpaid care work, and access to care, ensuring that care is recognized as a core component of climate resilience, adaptation, and equitable development.

Invest in care infrastructure and the care workforce:

Given that care systems are climate infrastructure, to address the climate crisis and its impacts, it's necessary to make significant investments in care infrastructure and the care workforce. This can include providing funding to scale the provision of childcare, healthcare, and the provision of water and sanitation, and make care infrastructure more accessible. Further, care workers should be recognized as part of the climate resilience workforce. Climate strategies should include investment in decent care jobs, including childcare, elder care, disability support, healthcare, education, and community care, alongside investments in renewable energy, transport, housing, and ecosystem restoration.

Strengthen women's representation and participation in government:

To ensure the perspectives of women and girls are represented, governance models should be adopted that legitimize the local knowledge of women caregivers, ensuring they have representation in decision-making spaces. When Indigenous communities are impacted, governance models should be further enhanced to include traditional knowledge in decision-making processes. Governance structures should also intentionally include representation of people with disabilities. Further, to help dismantle structural barriers that prevent women from participating in political leadership processes, funding should be provided to support establishing and operating political leadership schools dedicated to women and girls.

Expand care-sensitive social protection:

The burden of both paid and unpaid care needs to be better distributed and at the same time, governments need to make stronger investments in social protection. At present, women are shouldering far too much of the care burden. Much of the care work women are delivering is to fill gaps in government support. This care work amounts to a “gender subsidy.” Remedying the climate crisis will require governments to make significant investments in care-sensitive social protection. This could include investments to support the remuneration of unpaid care, investments in fair wages, safe working conditions, training, legal recognition, the expansion of childcare and elder care, and collective bargaining rights.

Multilateral institutions + global climate finance

Recognize care as adaptation infrastructure:

Care infrastructure is climate infrastructure and should be recognized as such in global climate finance mechanisms. Climate finance dedicated to adaptation should be extended to include investments in care systems, recognizing the inextricable link between climate change and care. Adopting this perspective would mean climate finance would be available to support the likes of childcare, elder care, disability support, health services, water, sanitation, food systems, safe housing, and social protection.

Increase localization:

Scale up the delivery of climate finance grants delivered in a way that promotes localization and decentralization, and support grants that can be directly targeted at creating or enhancing community care infrastructure – from healthcare to childcare to water, sanitation, and hygiene.

Finance community-led solutions:

Climate finance efforts should recognize and finance community-led care initiatives, including those led by women, Indigenous Peoples, youth, and grassroots organizations. Funding mechanisms should be accessible to local actors and support locally determined approaches that strengthen both care and climate resilience.

Philanthropy

Provide flexible, long-term, and direct funding to women-led and community-based organizations.

Women and girls are at the centre of both the climate crisis and the care crisis. To ensure that research on the climate-care nexus is continued and that solutions to the critical challenges at the heart of the nexus are advanced, continued funding needs to be made available to women-led and community-based organizations that are flexible, delivered at scale, and delivered over the long-term.

Support ecosystem building:

To advance research and solutions related to the climate-care nexus, continuing to support ecosystems is essential. As demonstrated by the Climate and Care Initiative, connecting grassroots, feminist, and Indigenous communities with researchers, funders, and government is an incredible catalyst for advancing change. Supporting ecosystems further accelerates critical South-South knowledge transfer, by creating networks across regions. There is significant opportunity to invest in the creation of new ecosystems across the Global South.

Invest in Global South leadership:

Investing in developing leadership across the Global South is another critical avenue that can advance solutions to the challenges of the climate-care nexus. Investing in Global South leadership is essential to build capacity in the regions most affected by the climate crisis, ensure that solutions are developed that incorporate local and traditional knowledge, and that equity in the global response to climate change is maintained.



The Climate and Care Initiative has made significant contributions to the climate and care domains,

specifically by highlighting the interconnected nature of both the climate crisis and the care crisis and that ultimately, care infrastructure is climate infrastructure. Key contributions the initiative has made to date that can be advanced by others include:



Building a shared conceptual framework.



Generating evidence from the Global South.



Positioning care as climate infrastructure.



Strengthening community-led solutions.



Creating a cross-regional ecosystem.



Opening new policy and research agendas.

Next steps

The evidence is clear: the climate crisis is worsening, the care crisis is worsening, and they are mutually reinforcing – as one gets worse, so does the other. At the centre of these mutually reinforcing crises are women and girls, who are shouldering extreme care burdens in their households and wider communities. For the survival of the planet and to protect the wellbeing and livelihoods of women and girls across the globe – and particularly in the Global South – it will be essential to maintain the momentum that the Climate and Care Initiative has started.

Continuing momentum is critical at this moment, first because the impacts of climate change continue unabated, but more positively, because there presently exists fertile ground to plant seeds of policy change. Put another way, there is an opportunity window existing now that can be leveraged. Global conversations on just transitions, loss and damage, and climate adaptation are intensifying, and new gender action plans have been adopted by global climate bodies, advancing gender-responsive climate solutions. At the same time, global conversations on the care crisis are also intensifying – a key focus of the UN's CSW71 will be the care economy. As recognition of both the climate crisis and the care crisis is further established, continuing to link the two is essential.

Recommendations and next steps

Key recommendations to ensure that this momentum can be maintained and the window of opportunity can be fully capitalized on include:

- **Scale up research, knowledge mobilization efforts, and South-South dialogues:**

The 23 projects funded through the Climate and Care Initiative have generated a wealth of data and evidence that is essential to linking the simultaneous climate and care crises to each other. To ensure that further data and evidence can be generated, additional projects should be supported in other locations across the Global South. Further, alongside research efforts, knowledge mobilization efforts should also be continued and scaled, enabling grassroots organizations and communities to learn from each other. South-South dialogues are critical to passing information, best practices, and advocacy tools between the communities most impacted by the climate and care crises.

- **Invest in knowledge translation and education for policymakers and the public:**

While the evidence around the climate-care nexus is clear, it's not well understood by policymakers or the public. Efforts and investments should be made to create accessible tools, documents, and campaigns that target policymakers and the public to help them better understand the scale and impacts of the climate crisis and care crisis, how they intersect and reinforce each other, and what policies are necessary to mitigate harm to both people and the planet.

- **Continue to equip communities with advocacy tools related to the climate-care nexus:**

Effectively equipping grassroots, Indigenous, and ecofeminist communities to advance advocacy related to the climate-care nexus is essential to advancing policy change at all levels of government – local, national, and, international. Funding should continue to be provided that supports advocacy workshops, developing communication materials, and the participation of women and girls in political and policy processes at the local, national, and global levels.

- **Integrate care into the conversation at major conferences and dialogues on climate change:**

As policymakers and civil society convene for major conferences and dialogues on climate change, it is essential to ensure that care and the climate-care nexus are focal points of conversation, and that the impacts of climate change on care and vice versa are woven into dialogues, so that outcomes can better reflect the solutions necessary to address the climate-care nexus. It is also important to ensure that care is as visible as possible at these events, through the convening of pavilions, side events and official events.

Recommendations and next steps

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Annex: Further reading and resources

- **The Climate and Care Initiative website** – [link](#)
- **Key publications from the Climate and Care Initiative**
 - Climate and Care Work: Integrated Solutions for Intersecting Crises
English – [link](#)
Spanish – [link](#)
 - Rethinking the connections between care and climate: a nexus approach
English – [link](#)
Spanish – [link](#)
 - The Climate-Care Nexus: A Conceptual Framework – Southern Centre for Inequality Studies – [link](#)
 - Centering Care in Climate Finance: A Feminist Blueprint for Adaptation, Resilience, and Climate Justice – [link](#)
 - Centering Care in Just Transitions and Climate Action: Elevating Grassroots Voices – [link](#)
 - CSW Official Side Event – Accelerating progress on the BPfA on women and the environment through a care centered just transition – [link](#)
 - Cuidados & Gestión de Riesgos Naturales” por la Corporación Red Juvenil de Derechos Humanos – [link](#)

Previous page: The **Centro de Derechos de la Mujer de Chiapas A.C.** supported work to strengthen the political participation of Indigenous Tseltal and Ch’ol women in the Selva region of Chiapas, Mexico, where patriarchal structures limit their access to land and resources.



climateandcareinitiative.org