



Make Mothers Matter (MMM)

<https://makemothersmatter.org>

Valerie Bichelmeier, Vice-President – valerie@makemothersmatter.org

Chapeau

Most of the multiple crises we face today have a common root cause - a lack of concern and respect for each other, for the environment and for other living beings. We urgently need a more caring world, and this is what governments must rally around: a commitment to (re)building a more caring economy and society.

Recognition and support for Care - in its broadest meaning - must therefore become central to decision making, and guide policymaking at every level. Care must be the thread of the Pact for the Future.

Chapter I. Sustainable development and financing for development

Whether paid or unpaid, Care work is foundational and indispensable, at the heart of humanity – and sustainable development.

Care notably includes the unpaid and invisible work which is done on a daily basis, mostly by women and girls, to sustain families, communities, society and the economy.

Yet, the inequitable distribution of this unpaid or underpaid work is at the root of Gender inequalities and discriminations against women and girls. It is the main structural barrier to women's effective participation in the Labour market and in politics, and one of the main obstacles to their access to decision making positions.

Without addressing this vital issue, neither progress on gender equality nor indeed the 2030 development agenda and the SDGs, can be realized.

Care is also central to the realization of Human Rights: it connects to most human rights, including the right to development. The work of caring - and the people behind it, in particular mothers – must therefore be recognized and supported. Care work and responsibilities must also be more equitably redistributed, first between men and women, but also across society (including through public infrastructures and services, and adequate supportive social protection).

Care should be considered in its broadest meaning: it is about people - in particular children - who are the next generation of workers and citizens, but also about our natural environment.

Care is central to the sustainability of life, which should be the main concern of governments.

In particular we urgently need to transform our current economic system, which prospers on the back of nature and women's work, and which is at the root of many of the multiple global crises we face today including rising inequalities, environmental degradation, loss of biodiversity and climate change.

The Pact for the Future must lead to systemic change, including the transition to a new economic model which prioritizes Care, Human Rights and the wellbeing of people and the planet, instead of endless GDP growth and short-term profit for a few. In other words, it is time to refocus sustainable development on its social and environmental pillars, and prioritize social and environmental profitability instead of purely financial profits.

Whether you call it a human rights economy, a wellbeing economy¹ or a caring economy, the new system must recognize, value and support caregivers and the work of caring for people and for the planet.

Chapter II. International peace and security

Recognizing the value of caring for each other and for the planet, and supporting this indispensable work, is about building more caring communities and societies, a more caring world, which in turn fosters solidarity and cooperation, inclusion and trust, and ultimately peace.

Peace begins in the home, and the educational role of parents, especially that of the mother, is crucial.

It is indeed within the family that a child's emotional balance is built, and that the values on which an individual is constructed are transmitted. It is also within the family that a child makes his first experiences of what safety or distress is, discovers the challenges of community life, and learns the peaceful or violent resolution for conflicts.

In addition, promoting men's involvement as equitable, non-violent fathers, and engaging them in childcare not only contributes to gender equality within families, but also reduces domestic violence².

Peace also crucially begins during early childhood: how a child is nurtured and cared for early in life has a direct impact on brain structure and function. In particular, stimulation, responsive caregiving, attachment, bonding and creating safe contexts for children, all have a positive influence on their brain development and can help them grow, learn and thrive. Providing nurturing care during these early years is therefore critical to a child's development to their full potential, and their ability to positively contribute to society and the economy later in life – triggering a virtuous circle and contributing to building peace.

Lastly, mothers share a common concern on the future of their children. As a result, they have a long-term perspective and they are good at building bridges, creating solidarity networks, and cultivating trust and confidence within local communities. All these skills are essential for conflict prevention and management, as well as post-conflict peace-building: mothers must therefore be recognized and empowered as essential peace builders.

¹ A few governments – Canada, Finland, Iceland, New Zealand, Scotland and Wales - are showing us the way: see the work of the Wellbeing Economy Government partnership (WEGo) and the Wellbeing Economy Alliance (WEAll): <https://weall.org/>

² See MenCare's State of the World's Father report series: <https://men-care.org/resources/?type=publications>

Supporting early childhood care and education at family and community levels and the people doing this critical work - beginning with mothers - is a much-needed investment to create a culture of peace, respect for diversity, social cohesion; it is key to prevent conflicts and violence worldwide³.

And it is our collective responsibility. This aspect of prevention – in particular giving parents and other caregivers better recognition as well as training, information and support - must be part of the Pact of the future’s chapter on international peace and security.

Chapter III. Science, technology and innovation and digital cooperation

The gender bias in STI must urgently be addressed. A new narrative must be promoted, which encourages girls and women to study STEM: we need girls who code and boys who care.

Not only should the gender gaps in digital literacy and access be addressed, but the whole purpose and focus of STI must be reconsidered so that it answers essential needs, does not harm – in particular children and adolescents - and benefits everyone equitably.

STI should better support health, education and care – and the people providing these essential services, i.e. mostly women.

In particular, STI must be harnessed to address the scourge of maternal mortality and morbidity, improve maternal health – including maternal mental health - support early childhood development, and education and life-long learning for all⁴.

Chapter IV. Youth and future generations

Mothers are the first caregivers and educators of their children. They are an important force in shaping the next generation of workers and citizens, and they must be recognized and supported as such.

³ See in particular the work of the Ealy Childhood Peace Consortium (ECPC) of which MMM is a member: <https://ecdpeace.org/>

⁴ See MMM CSW67 written statement on ‘Harnessing digital technologies to empower mothers – and their children’ - <https://makemothersmatter.org/harnessing-digital-technologies-to-empower-mothers-and-their-children/> and the event we organized on the margins of CSocD59 on ‘Harnessing digital technologies for maternal health and parenting’ - <https://makemothersmatter.org/harnessing-digital-technologies-for-family-wellbeing-our-collective-responsibility/>