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المملكة المغربية  
وزارة التضامن والإعماج الاجتماعي  
والأسرة

**PATHFINDERS**  
FOR PEACEFUL, JUST AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES



## Concept note

### 67th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women

6 March 2023, New York

*Side event organized in cooperation between the Kingdom of Morocco and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)*

**« The role of the care economy in tackling women's economic participation obstacles in the Arab region, in light of technological development »**

## Context

Women's economic participation is a fundamental pillar for achieving sustainable growth. Women are major contributors to the cultural, economic, political and social advancement of society. The role of women in society is determined by the division of labor, the different social relations between groups, and a process of organization and sharing of roles, based on strong family social ties that represent the foundation of society's progress.

Thus, the care economy, in which women and girls play a prominent role, is one of the main social functions, and one in which the contribution to the advancement of societies is often not valued. The relevance of the care economy is reflected in the growing desire of society to satisfy a number of daily needs and requirements, especially since with the advancement of societies and their need to satisfy a number of material needs, another desire has arisen related to the fulfilment of intangible needs, mainly related to social services, and especially care services.

With the technological development that has taken over in all areas, a new way of life characterized by fast pace and the emergence of new social functions has appeared, imposing a rebalancing between public and private life. This change in society has made the service of the care economy one of the main necessities. This translates into the provision of care services, whether in the private sphere (domestic work, caring for family members, the elderly, children,

people with disabilities), or in the public sphere, placing the burden of reconciling public and private life on women.

Also, it is clear that women and girls, in the Arab world and particularly in Morocco, take on many roles within the household, which are often unpaid jobs, and many women, especially those working outside their homes, are required to compensate for these functions by providing care services through the private sector or public institutions, or by employing a domestic worker.

Unpaid work is one of the obstacles faced by women and girls in Morocco, particularly women who work in either the private or public sector. Women therefore carry an unregulated double burden, which is why it is necessary to invest in advancing the status of women in the care economy. To this end, digitalization must be used as a lever to support women, creating mechanisms to facilitate access to services and means of communication and organizing this double burden often assumed by women. Digitalization is also an essential tool to facilitate and accelerate women's access to training and reintegration programs from their homes.

Improving women's economic participation cannot be achieved unless policies are adopted that take into account the burden of unpaid care borne by women and seek to reduce it and achieve an equitable redistribution among all stakeholders (family members, the state and society). Through financial support to women entrepreneurs, non-unionized workers and the unemployed, the development of the care economy is essential to alleviate the burden on women and allow them to free up their time for economic activity.

Despite the growing need for care services, these remain mostly unpaid and fall on women, when not being regulated or at high cost. Workers in this sector are often poorly paid, do not have access to their labor rights, and this is particularly true in the case of the use of unqualified migrant workers, without respecting the standards and prerequisites of qualification.

In this context, calling for a debate on the issue of the care economy, in which women and girls play a crucial role in the stability of the family and society, the Kingdom of Morocco organizes in cooperation with the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the Pathfinders Initiative of the Center for International Cooperation of New York University and the National Institute of Social Work of the Ministry of Solidarity, Social Inclusion and the Family in Tangier, a side event, on the sidelines of the meetings and activities of the sixty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women, on Monday, March 6, 2023, with the aim of discussing initiatives and research on ways to promote the care economy.

This event will initiate a reflection on how to harness technological developments to improve, organize and deliver care services in a more efficient, safe and transparent manner, and enhance access for all through new models of care and improving the efficiency of workers in this sector, leading to the strengthening of women's economic inclusion and reducing gender inequalities.

#### Legal basis in Morocco

Law 19.12 on the Definition of Employment and Conditions of Employment of Female and Domestic Workers established a set of requirements to regulate the occupation of male and

female workers, defining the conditions of employment of female and domestic workers. It also specified working hours, weekly rest, annual leave and rest days, in addition to wages, controls and penalties. One of the most important requirements of this law is that it defines the concept of domestic worker and employer, as well as domestic work, and gives this category a new name in line with the International Labor Organization's Convention No. 189 concerning Decent Work for Domestic Workers, as well as in response to the spirit of international covenants based on respect for human rights.

It should be noted that Law 18.45, regulating the profession of women and social workers, defines in its article 2 the definition of social worker: any independent person who, in a professional capacity, assists groups or individuals of various categories who are unable to participate fully in social life, in order to facilitate their integration into society and to ensure or maintain their independence and preserve their dignity, to be called "social worker".

### Indicators of time spent by women on household tasks in Morocco

Women spend 20.8% of their daily time on household tasks and only 5.6% on professional activities. While men, unlike women, spend more time on professional activities (22.6%) than on housework (3%). However, women's work activity does not relieve them of their family responsibilities, as they continue to bear the burden of household chores, spending 4 hours and 18 minutes per day, only slightly less than a housewife's 1 hour and 42 minutes.

Thus, as a result of the time allocated to professional and domestic activities, the average daily workload of a working woman reaches 6 hours and 21 minutes (5 hours and 47 minutes in the city and 7 hours and 13 minutes in the villages), as the percentage of time devoted to domestic activities represents 79% of this load.<sup>1</sup>

## Side Event Objectives

- Focus on the challenges of the care economy that hinder the promotion of women's and girls' economic participation, in light of technological development.
- Share regional and global experiences on the care economy to identify best practices among Arab countries and pioneers in this field.
- Presenting efforts in the Arab region, particularly the Kingdom of Morocco, in the area of unpaid care work and economic participation of women.
- Develop recommendations for governments, the private sector and stakeholders, based on international and regional experiences, on best practices in the field of care economy and promoting women's economic participation and overall development.
- To highlight the general context of the care economy in the Arab countries, and its importance in achieving comprehensive development.

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<sup>1</sup> HCP information note for International Women's Day (March 8, 2021) <https://www.hcp.ma/>.

- Analyze the progress of decent work policies and the care economy and their impact on women's economic participation.
- Opportunities offered by technological progress and innovation to structure the care economy sector and facilitate access to it.

## Proposed schedule for the side event

- Ms. Awaatif Hayar, Minister of Solidarity, Social Inclusion and Family, Kingdom of Morocco.
- Dr. Mehrinaz Al-Awadi, Director of the Gender, Population and Global Development Cluster (UN ESCWA) on the situation of Arab women and the role of the care economy as a vehicle for changing the status of women.
- Dr. Faiza Shaheen, Program Director, Inequality and Exclusion, Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies - on the role of the care economy at the global level in reducing inequality and achieving social justice.
- Dr Jemimah Njuki est le chef de la section de l'autonomisation économique à ONU Femmes.
- Dr. Doaa Fouad Khalifa, Director of the Education and Scientific Research Department at the League of Arab States, representative of the Arab Women's Committee.

### Representatives of Member States