

## Transforming Care Systems for a Changing World: A South-South Dialogue

Thursday, 13 March 2025 | 10:00 – 11:15 AM

Eastern Daylight Time (New York)

CR-F, United Nations Headquarters, New York

### Concept Note

#### 1. Introduction

This CSW69 side event “**Transforming Care Systems for a Changing World: A South-South Dialogue**” brings together leading regional and national institutions at CSW69 to advance the global care economy agenda. It is organized by the Kingdom of Cambodia, the Governments of Brazil and Chile, the Government of Mexico through the Secretary of Women, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), with the support of Global Alliance for Care (GAC). This strategic collaboration offers a unique global platform for cross-regional knowledge exchange and South-South cooperation to transform care systems and advance innovative care economy solutions.

#### 2. Context

The care economy encompasses all forms of care work—both paid and unpaid—that are fundamental to human survival, societal well-being, and economic sustainability. While paid care work spans remunerated labour in sectors like health, education, and personal care services, unpaid care and domestic work (UCDW) includes both direct care for individuals and indirect tasks such as household maintenance. The care economy represents a new vision of economics that recognizes the importance of care work and the contribution of women to the functioning of the economies, the wellbeing of societies and the sustainability of life.

Unpaid care and domestic work is overwhelmingly performed by women. Globally, women spend 2.5 times as many hours a day on unpaid care and domestic work as men (UN Women and DESA, 2024)<sup>1</sup>. This burden significantly impacts women's participation in the labour market, with 606 million women—41 per cent of those currently not in the workforce—excluded due to unpaid

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<sup>1</sup> UN WOMEN and DESA, *Progress on the sustainable development goals. The Gender Snapshot 2024*.

care responsibilities, compared to only 41 million men.<sup>2</sup> Women who do enter the paid workforce often face additional barriers such as the "motherhood employment penalty," reduced wages, and limited leadership opportunities due to caregiving responsibilities.<sup>3</sup>

Three decades ago, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action already highlighted the unequal share of "unremunerated domestic work and community work" performed by women and called for making women's care work visible through data and evidence. Since then, addressing this inequality has been recognized as a crucial step to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 5 on gender equality.

Today, multiple recent and emerging trends have heightened the urgency for systemic transformation in care. The care crisis, defined as the growing gap between the demand for care and the available people, services, and infrastructure to provide it, was highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic, underscoring the importance of care while clearly signalling the unsustainability of its current organization. The global climate emergency, coupled with cascading crises and multiplying conflicts, has further exacerbated care demands on women and girls. Demographic changes—particularly population ageing in multiple countries—alongside increased urbanization, international migration, evolving social norms, and the diversification of household structures, have left fewer people able to provide care, even as the number of those requiring care increases. Simultaneously, digitalization has led to the rise of the gig and platform economies, creating both challenges and opportunities in the form of flexiwork and care entrepreneurship for women.

In response to these emerging challenges and opportunities, several countries across regions have already undertaken initiatives to formulate gender-transformative and care-responsive policies and build comprehensive care systems. The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean have contributed to driving these advances, leading an approach that recognizes care as a right, a public good, an essential job, and an economic sector. The Regional [Gender Agenda](#), adopted at the sessions of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean since 1977, is highlighted. The most recent [Buenos Aires Commitment \(2022\)](#) which calls for a move towards the care society, that centres care for people and the planet. This model recognizes care as a right (the right to provide and receive care and to self-care) and proposes to address the structural causes of gender inequality, from the perspectives of gender, intersectionality, interculturality and human rights and calls for overcoming the gender-based division of labour, promoting a fair social organization of care within a development framework that drives gender equality across economic, social, and environmental dimensions. Reflecting these regional efforts, several countries, such as Brazil, Chile, Colombia Costa Rica, Mexico, and Uruguay, among others have been developing Comprehensive Care Systems and policies that address care

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<sup>2</sup> ILO, *Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work* (Geneva, 2018).

<sup>3</sup> ESCAP, *Investing in Our Common Future: Building a 'Caring Society'* (Bangkok, 2024)

inequalities and promote gender equality. Under Chile's presidency in ECOSOC, the resolution [“Promoting Care and Support Systems for Social Development”](#) (E/CN.5/2024/L.5) was approved, the first of its kind in this intergovernmental forum. This resolution highlights the fundamental role of care systems in achieving the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) and ensuring the social, economic, and environmental well-being of our societies. Various actors have agreed that reorganizing care work is essential for achieving the SDGs. The XVI Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, which will be held in Mexico in 2025 under the theme Transformations in Political, Economic, Social, Cultural, and Environmental Fields to Foster the Care Society and Gender Equality, will provide a key space to deepen the necessary strategies and consolidate this approach across the region.

In Asia and the Pacific, ESCAP has developed the [Model Framework for Action on the Care Economy \(MFA\)](#) which serves as an action-oriented framework for creating effective and comprehensive care systems.<sup>4</sup> The core of this model is protecting the Right to Give and Receive Care, articulated through four key elements: Political categories of care; Political Economy of care; Levers of change; Normative principles. Most recently, the MFA supports the development of the [ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening the Care Economy and Fostering Resilience Towards the Post-2025 ASEAN Community](#) which was adopted in October 2024. Guided by this framework, Cambodia adopted a whole-of-government approach to care and is finalizing its National Care Economy Framework and Action Plan. This plan aims to strengthen care-related legal and policy frameworks, improve data collection and evidence on care work, transform public perception of care work's value, and increase both public investment and private partnerships. Additionally, between 2020 and 2024, Cambodia facilitated the Community-Based Childcare Centers project which piloted innovative models for providing sustainable, affordable, and safe childcare services to young children of garment factory workers.

In the Arab region, ESCWA has developed a common approach and guidelines which serve as basis for supporting countries in scaling up their capacities and advancing care policies. . Further to regional level advocacy and exchange to push care policies forward, and following the proposed approach, ESCWA is supporting care-related legislative changes in Oman, Morocco and Lebanon. Lebanon has proposed two law bills to establish flexible work, provide for childcare in the workplace, amend parental leaves and has been drafting an action to mobilise resources to advocate for these key legislative proposals..

In 2021, the Government of Mexico and UN Women launched the Global Alliance for Care, a global multistakeholder platform to advance the care agenda through collective action, advocacy, and horizontal learning. In July 2024, the UN System policy paper "Transforming Care Systems in

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<sup>4</sup> ESCAP, *Model Framework for Policy Action on the Care Economy: Concept Paper* (United Nations Publication, 2024).

the Context of the Sustainable Development Goals and Our Common Agenda" called for coordinated, UN system-wide collaboration to transform care systems.<sup>5</sup> Under this framework, this CSW69 side event, within the context of the Beijing+30 Review, and building on the high-level panel of Regional Commissions foreseen on 10th March, provides a strategic global platform for cross-regional collaboration, knowledge exchange, and South-South cooperation. It provides an opportunity to advance interregional learning on care economy solutions. As a pivotal moment for assessing progress on gender equality 30 years after the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, CSW69 presents an unparalleled opportunity for all regions to work together in achieving SDG 5.4 and driving transformative change in the global care economy.

## 2. Objectives

The objective of this side event is to serve as an interactive platform for key stakeholders across regions to examine ways to advance policies that value and invest in the care economy in the context of shifting global and local challenges. The dialogue aims to accelerate progress toward the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Sustainable Development Goal 5 (“achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls”) and target 5.4 (“recognize and value 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 as nationally appropriate”).

Specifically, the side event will aim to:

1. **Strengthen South-South collaboration** and interregional exchange through showcasing promising practices in gender-transformative and care-responsive policies, sharing innovative tools and resources, and fostering partnerships among Member States and global partners.
2. **Highlight countries' efforts and raise awareness of the multiplier effects of the care economy** as a driver of gender equality, resilience, inclusive and sustainable development, emphasizing its urgency in the face of multiple global challenges including climate change, digitalization, and demographic shifts.
3. **Advocate for sustainable financing** and multi-stakeholder partnerships to operationalize the care economy agenda.

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<sup>5</sup> United Nations, “Transforming Care Systems in the Context of the Sustainable Development Goals and Our Common Agenda”, UN System Policy Paper (New York, 2024).

The expected outcome of this event is to highlight global progress in addressing the care economy, foster cross-regional learning on tools and promising practices, and inspire stakeholders to take bold and coordinated action towards gender equality and sustainable development.

### 3. Participants

The side event will bring together representatives from governments, development partners, civil society organizations, academia and professionals working towards achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, in addition to the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development.

### 4. Modality/Structure of Event

The side event will be convened in person at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, and will be conducted through an interactive format to facilitate the exchange of knowledge, good practices and lessons learned. Participants may ask questions during the Q&A session(s) and/or share their observations and experiences through brief interventions.

### 5. Programme

10:00-10:15	<p><b>Opening Remarks (4' each)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>H. E. Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) <i>Delivered by Ms. Cai Cai, Chief of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion, Social Development Division, ESCAP</i></li> <li>Ms. Ana Güzmes García, Director, Division for Gender Affairs, ECLAC</li> <li>Ms. Thilmeeza Hussain, Director of the Regional Commissions New York Office, United Nations</li> <li>H.E. Dr Ing Kantha Phavi, Minister of Women's Affairs, Kingdom of Cambodia</li> </ul>
10:15-11:10	<p><b>Panel Discussion</b></p> <p>Theme: <i>"Global Trends, Regional Perspectives, Local Actions: Building Resilient and Comprehensive Care Systems and policies"</i></p> <p>Moderator: Ms. Ana Moreno, Technical Secretary, the Global Alliance for Care</p> <p>Speakers (8' each):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Cambodia:</b> Cambodia's experience in working towards a care-responsive policy ecosystem <i>by Mr The Chhunhak, Director General, Ministry of Women's Affairs</i></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Chile:</b> Global regional and local synergies - The perspective of Chile in advancing the right to care, <i>by Ms. Gloria de la Fuente Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Chile</i></li> <li>• <b>Brazil:</b> Building a national care policy and advancing the right to care in Brazil <i>by Ms. Lais Abramo, National Secretary for Care and Family</i></li> <li>• <b>Lebanon:</b> Adoption of care law/care in Recovery Frameworks in Post-Conflict Settings <i>by M. Nathalie Zaarour, Member of the National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW)</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Discussants (4' each):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ms. Elvina Sousa Carvalho, Secretary of State for Equality, Government of Timor-Leste, Timor-Leste</li> <li>• Ms. Patricia Carranza, Director General of Intelligence, Secretariat of Women of the Government of Mexico</li> </ul> <p>Q&amp;A (10')</p>
11:10-11:15	<p><b>Closing Remarks (5' each)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ms. Nada Darwazeh, Chief of ESCWA Center for Women</li> </ul>

## 6. Useful Links

**United Nations** (2024) [Transforming Care Systems: UN System Policy Paper](#)

### UNESCAP

ESCAP Case Study Reports on the Care Economy: Lao PDR (forthcoming) [Cambodia](#), [Indonesia](#), [the Philippines](#), and [Uzbekistan](#)

[ESCAP and ASEAN \(2021\) ASEAN Comprehensive Framework on Care Economy](#)

[ESCAP \(2021\) COVID-19 and the Unpaid Care Economy in Asia and the Pacific](#)

[ESCAP \(2021\) Addressing Unpaid Care Work in ASEAN](#)

[ESCAP \(2023\) Regional Forum on Care Work in ASEAN Countries Meeting Report](#)

[ESCAP \(2024\) Investing in Our Common Future: Building a “Caring” Society](#)

[ESCAP \(2024\) Policymaker’s Toolkit on Valuing Unpaid Care and Domestic Work](#)

### ECLAC

[ECLAC \(2022\) The care society: a horizon for sustainable recovery with gender equality](#)

[Buenos Aires Commitment \(2022\)](#)

[ECLAC \(2024\) Social Protection, the care crisis and aging \(Chapter 3 in the Social Panorama 2024\)](#)

[ECLAC \(2023\) Gender Equality and the Care Society](#)

[ECLAC/UN Women \(2023\) Advances in care policies in Latin America and the Caribbean: towards a care society with gender equality](#)

[ECLAC \(2022\) Financing care systems and policies in Latin America and the Caribbean: contributions for a sustainable recovery with gender equality](#)

[ECLAC \(2022\) Decentring GDP: Well-being, care and time](#)

[UN Economist Network \(2022\) Purple Economy](#)

## **ESCWA**

[ESCWA \(2024\) Advancing care economy in the Arab region: A pathway to fulfilling dignity and rights and enhancing women's economic empowerment](#)

Case Study: [Lebanon](#), [Saudi Arabia](#), Morocco, Oman

[ESCWA \(2022\) Lessons from the COVID-19 crisis in the Arab region](#)

[ESCWA \(2022\) Law proposals on flexible work arrangements in Lebanon](#)

## **Global Alliance for Care**

[Design, Approval and Implementation of National Care Systems and/or National Care Policies Towards people-centered Comprehensive Care Systems and Policies: Dialogues between Latin America, the Caribbean, and the European Union](#)

## **7. Contact**

### **Kingdom of Cambodia**

Mr. The Chhun Hak, Director General, Ministry of Women's Affairs [chhunhak@gmail.com](mailto:chhunhak@gmail.com)

### **Secretary of Women, Mexico**

(tbc)

The **United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP)** provides an inclusive intergovernmental platform for governments and other stakeholders in the region to accelerate the implementation of global gender equality commitments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the outcomes of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the Beijing Platform for Action, as well as the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

*Ms. Channe Lindstrøm Oguzhan, Social Affairs Officer, Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Section, Social Development Division, ESCAP [lindstromoguzhan@un.org](mailto:lindstromoguzhan@un.org)*

The **United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UN ECLAC)**-the Spanish acronym is CEPAL- was founded with the purpose of contributing to the economic development of Latin America, coordinating actions directed towards this end, and reinforcing economic ties among countries and with other nations of the world. The promotion of the region's social development was later included among its primary objectives.

*Ms. Ana Ferigra Stefanovic, Consultant, Gender Affairs Division, ECLAC [ana.ferigra-stefanovic@cepal.org](mailto:ana.ferigra-stefanovic@cepal.org)*

The **United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN ESCWA)** supports its 21 member States in their efforts to ensure prosperity and equality. By analysing regional and national economic, social and environmental trends in the light of global United Nations agendas, ESCWA provides Arab countries with policy recommendations that build on a thorough analysis of facts and commonalities. It also underscores the benefits of integration and creates regional public goods, including knowledge, data, tools and capacity.

*Ms. Rouba Arja, Social Affairs Officer, Gender Justice, Population and Inclusive Development Cluster, ESCWA [arja@un.org](mailto:arja@un.org)*

### **Global Alliance for Care**

The Global Alliance for Care was launched by the Government of Mexico and UN Women at the 2021 Generation Equality Forum as a global multistakeholder community to advance the care agenda from the global to the local levels. The Alliance boasts a membership of over 250 actors, including national and local governments, civil society organizations, donors and philanthropies, private sector enterprises, academic institutions, and international organisms. Through the Alliance, these members collaborate to devise advocacy, learning and communications strategies for care.

*Yara Tarabulsi, Outreach and Advocacy Officer, Global Alliance for Care [yara@globalallianceforcare.org](mailto:yara@globalallianceforcare.org)*

## **8. Background**

### **Cambodia's Whole-of-Government Approach: Transforming the Care Economy**

Cambodia has emerged as a regional leader in developing comprehensive care policies. In 2021, the Ministry of Women's Affairs, in collaboration with key line ministries, conducted extensive mapping of existing commitments and policy interventions to strengthen the care economy. This groundwork led to the development of Cambodia's National Care Economy Framework and Action Plan, which adopts a holistic approach focusing on four policy categories identified in ESCAP's MFA: care infrastructure, care-related social protection, care services, and employment-related care policies. The action plan aims to enhance care-related legal and policy frameworks, strengthen data collection and evidence-based policymaking, transform public perception of care work's value, and increase both public investment and private sector engagement.

To address the critical gap in affordable and quality childcare services, particularly for garment sector workers, an innovative Community-Based Childcare Centers (CBCC) initiative was launched in Cambodia during 2020-2024. The project aims to establish 22 childcare centers in communities near garment factories, where public daycare services are limited, providing sustainable, affordable, and quality childcare services for children aged 6-36 months. The CBCC model demonstrates Cambodia's commitment to addressing care needs through community-based solutions, while promoting compliance with national labour laws and supporting women's participation in the workforce. Beyond serving garment workers'



families, these centers also benefit broader communities through accessible parenting education and sensitization programmes.

### **ESCAP: Advancing the Care Economy in Asia and the Pacific**

ESCAP has established itself as a leading force in accelerating the implementation of global gender equality commitments in Asia and the Pacific through its comprehensive work on the care economy. The Commission has developed critical knowledge products including reports on "COVID-19 and the Unpaid Care Economy in Asia and the Pacific" and "How to Invest in the Care Economy: a Primer", a policy brief on "Investing in our Common Future: Building a 'Caring' Society", and comprehensive case studies in Cambodia, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Through robust technical cooperation partnerships, ESCAP has engaged with multiple member States including Cambodia, China, Lao PDR, the Philippines, and regional bodies such as ASEAN.

A key milestone in ESCAP's care work was the development of the Model Framework for Action on the Care Economy (MFA), created in collaboration with the Institute of Development Studies (IDS). This innovative framework addresses the multifaceted nature of care policy through four key components: the political economy of care, normative principles of care, policy categories, and levers of change. The MFA has proven instrumental in guiding Asia-Pacific countries in designing their national consultations and developing national action plans. Notably, it informed the drafting of the ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening the Care Economy and Fostering Resilience Towards the Post-2025 ASEAN Community.

Building on the MFA's success and extensive experience in capacity building, ESCAP developed the comprehensive Policymaker's Toolkit on Valuing Unpaid Care and Domestic Work and Investing in the Care Economy. This four-part toolkit equips policymakers with practical resources for implementing effective care economy policies.

### **ECLAC: Advancing the Care Society**

ECLAC has called for a paradigm shift: advancing the construction of a [care society](#) that centers on the sustainability of life and the planet. This implies a profound transformation in the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of development, recognizing the role of care in sustaining life and the planet, and acknowledging eco-dependence (human dependence on nature), interdependence among people, and care as a necessity, an essential job, and a right. It also envisions care as a sector with the potential to boost economies. The proposal draws on contributions from feminist economics and movements, the Buen Vivir (good living) approach advocated by the region's Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples, public health perspectives, and multilateral dialogue and engagement with governments, civil society organizations, and international bodies.

Latin America and the Caribbean are leading an approach that recognizes care as a right, a public good, an essential job, and an economic sector, both within the inter-American human rights system and through agreements adopted in ECLAC's intergovernmental bodies. The Regional Gender Agenda, adopted at the sessions of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean since 1977, is

highlighted. The Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean is organized by ECLAC, as the Conference Secretariat, and since 2020, in coordination with UN Women.

The most recent Buenos Aires Commitment (2022) recognizes care as a right of individuals to provide care, be cared for, and practice self-care, and calls for overcoming the gender-based division of labour, promoting a fair social organization of care within a development framework that drives gender equality across economic, social, and environmental dimensions. It sets a path towards a care society, proposing agreements for transformative recovery with gender equality and sustainability. The XVI Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, which will be held in Mexico in 2025 under the theme Transformations in Political, Economic, Social, Cultural, and Environmental Fields to Foster the Care Society and Gender Equality, will provide a key space to deepen the necessary strategies and consolidate this approach across the region.

### **ESCWA's care work**

At the regional level, ESCWA is working to allow countries to exchange experiences and lessons. ESCWA developed guidelines on advancing care policies in the Arab region to guide capacity building efforts, in addition to a paper on the lessons from the COVID-19 crisis in the Arab region studying the effect of the pandemic on gender equality and women economic empowerment through the lens of its effect on care economy. ESCWA, in partnership with the League of Arab States and UN Women, organized two regional workshops to strengthen the capacities of the subcommittee on Gender Equality and the SDGs on women's economic participation and care policies in 2021 and 2022. Moreover, ESCWA and the InterParliamentary Union (IPU) co-organized, in partnership with UN Women and the International Labour Organization (ILO), a regional meeting on “The role of parliamentarians in accelerating the achievement of women’s economic empowerment in the Arab region: Focus on care policies” held in January and February 2024.

In Lebanon, a case study on women’s economic empowerment and childcare was prepared and a multi-stakeholder dialogue on childcare economy was conducted. Furthermore, a legal study was prepared to identify the changes needed in the legal framework related to the implementation of flexible work arrangements in the country. The study led to the submission, in March 2023, by the head of the Lebanese Women and Children Parliamentary Committee, of a law proposal to amend the Lebanese Code of Labour to account for flexible work arrangements in Lebanon. This law proposal was launched at a special event in June 2023 and was followed by another law proposal also submitted by the head of the Women and Children Parliamentary Committee relating to maternity leave and breastfeeding, paternity leave, nurseries in the workplace, and the amendment of some aspects of social security which discriminate in coverage between men and women. To assist in paving the way towards the adoption of the two law proposals, and under the request of the committee chair, ESCWA supported the Women and Children Parliamentary Committee in the development of an Action Plan comprising a set of required activities including legal advisory, technical 4 advisory and awareness and advocacy campaigns. This Action Plan was presented in a meeting in January 2024 aiming at the mobilization of resources and partners for its implementation.

## **The Global Alliance for Care: Galvanizing global action on the care agenda**

In only three years, the Global Alliance for Care has become world-renowned as a critical avenue for actors to drive change towards a just care economy, gender equality, and sustainable development. Its unique potential lies in its multistakeholder constituency, which brings together governments, civil society, the private sector, and international organizations. As part of the Alliance, these members collaborate to advance the care agenda worldwide from a diverse and intersectoral perspective.

Thanks to its diversity and flexibility, the GAC has become a dynamic force on the international stage, advocating and contributing to the recognition, reduction and redistribution of care work and the reward and representation of care workers. This community has enabled its diverse membership to jointly position its transformative vision of care in high-level deliberation processes and multilateral spaces, such as the United Nations General Assembly, the Commission on the Status of Women sessions, and the G20, among others.

The Alliance has also created a key platform for interested policymakers and stakeholders to learn how they can contribute to a just care economy. The GAC's highly successful communities of analysis and thematic webinar series have proven to be important avenues to explore different dimensions of the care agenda and learn about best practices and successful care policies and systems, especially within the Global South. The GAC has also disseminated accessible and multimedia messaging around care, while centering the voices of care givers and receivers and promoting its transformative vision of care.