ADVOCACY BRIEF

Integrating Care into Global Climate Policy Processes:

A Guide for Advocates

Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), as a contribution to the Climate and Care: Knowledge for Action Collective

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Executive Summary

The climate crisis is reinforcing the gendered and economic inequalities of care: who provides it, who receives it, and who bears the increased burden. Environmental degradation increases the demand for care as climate impacts drive worsened health outcomes, broader displacement, food and water insecurity, and the loss of livelihoods and economic opportunity, while simultaneously undermining the care systems and public services that sustain individual and community well-being.[1] National and global climate policies can reinforce existing inequalities when they fail to recognize, reduce, and redistribute unpaid care work (and reward and represent paid care work) by investing in strong care infrastructure. Integrating care into climate policy is a crucial matter of addressing gender, economic and social inequalities in care burdens, and a necessity for effective, equitable, and resilient climate action.

Care is essential climate infrastructure, yet it remains largely invisible in climate policy. Therefore, **care advocates** have a critical role to play in shaping climate policy arenas at the national, regional and global levels. To influence climate policy, the care advocacy community does not need technical expertise in climate science, but to understand the policy processes that determine climate priorities, financing, implementation, and accountability. From the Sendai Gender Action Plan, to National Adaptation Plans, to the myriad of national health and just transition policies, the pathways for care advocacy in climate policy processes are plentiful and vital. This policy brief aims to highlight the key climate policy spaces where **care advocates** can engage strategically alongside climate justice allies to ensure the recognition and integration of care across national and global policy arenas.

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1 Please see Annex on page 11 to find key resources among the robust body of evidence / knowledge base of the intersections of care and climate.

Introduction

National and global climate policy processes have profound implications for care systems and policy, from investments in public services and infrastructure, labor and job opportunities, to social protection systems and climate finance for adaptation, mitigation, and addressing loss and damage. Feminist analysis has recently highlighted that as climate policy processes iterate and evolve, care advocates are often absent or underrepresented in the spaces where these decisions are made, and advocacy is too siloed between climate and care advocacy communities.

This brief is a practical guide for care advocates developed through a participatory process with input from 19 organizations from the Global South, outlining important national and global climate policy processes, the mandates they have, the kinds of decisions they influence, and the key opportunities to engage. Rather than making the case for why care belongs in climate policy (see **Annex** for resources below), we focus on **where, when, and how care advocates can influence climate policy processes** and what emerging opportunities exist to ensure care is central to climate action.

The climate crisis is increasing the demand for care while simultaneously weakening the systems, services, and infrastructure that support it. Extreme events, environmental degradation, water crises, food insecurity, and health impacts are creating new care needs and amplifying existing ones, disproportionately affecting vulnerable communities. As a result, caregivers—whether paid or unpaid—must devote more time and effort to these tasks, while facing structural barriers to access the necessary resources. This includes workers in the care sector, such as community health workers, who play a key role in responding to these growing needs while facing greater risks to their health, safety, and well-being.

In addition, the climate crisis and environmental degradation are damaging care infrastructure itself. From the financial cost of adaptation measures to climate-related disasters causing direct damage to care-related infrastructure, such as medical and educational facilities, and social networks, communities who are already more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change face even greater demands on care work and care infrastructure to respond.

Due to existing gendered divisions of labor, women, girls and gender-diverse people typically provide an invisible care work subsidy in times of crisis and disaster—filling in the gaps that government social protections and official care infrastructure may fail to cover. As care is addressed more in climate policy processes, it is necessary to ensure that policies do not exacerbate existing inequalities, but instead address them to advance climate, gender and care justice together.

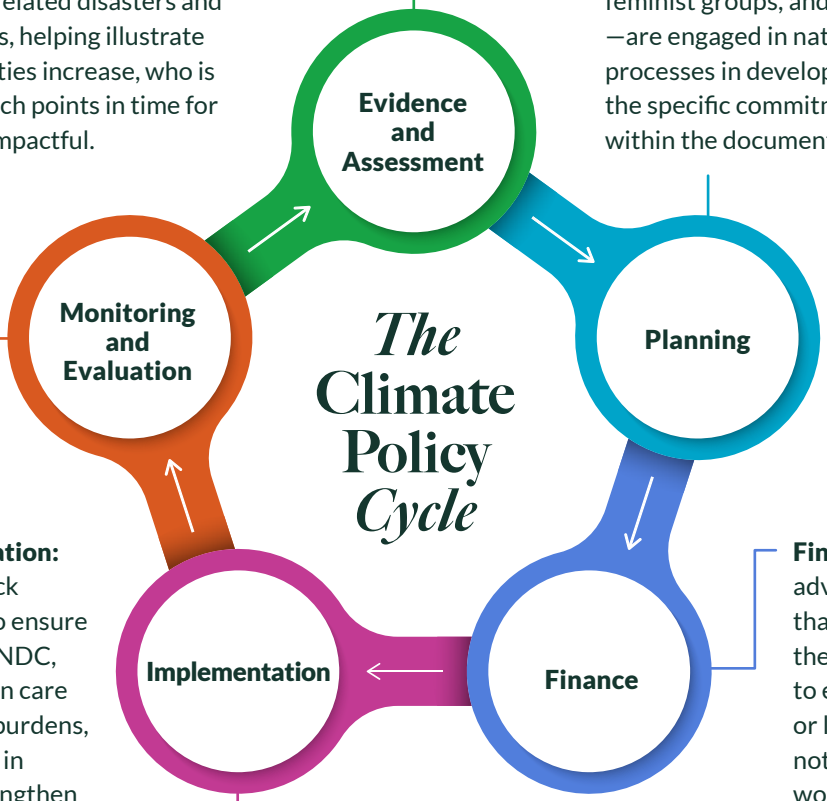
This guide is intended to complement a growing body of work on the climate–care nexus, including research that establishes the conceptual links between the climate crisis and care, proposes policy solutions, and hones in on specific recommendations for labor sectors or regional focuses. It is intended primarily for care policy, women's rights and feminist organizations, care worker unions and associations, researchers, and civil society organizations that are experienced with and leading care advocacy but may be less familiar with climate policy architecture and processes. Additionally, government officials and policymakers will find this guide useful in assessing entry points for connecting care and climate policy across climate policy processes.

Global Climate Policy Processes: Understanding the Climate Policy Cycle

Care advocates have a vital perspective in advocating at each of the stages of the climate policy cycle, shown in the graphic below. For example, if we take the policy process of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) that each country submits as part of the Paris Agreement[2], care advocacy may look like:

Evidence and Assessment: EX: Care advocates have robust and intersectional data that demonstrates how care work increases in the midst of climate-related disasters and extreme weather events, helping illustrate where care responsibilities increase, who is most impacted, and which points in time for intervention are most impactful.

Planning: EX: Care advocates—representing a diverse range of care advocacy organizations, women's and feminist groups, and grassroots leaders—are engaged in national consultation processes in developing an NDC, shaping the specific commitments and initiatives within the document.



Monitoring and Evaluation: EX: Care advocates track progress and impacts to ensure transparency from the NDC, evaluating the impact on care workers, unequal care burdens, and care infrastructure in order to shape and strengthen the next cycle. Independent evaluation outside of government processes, including producing and compiling data and responding to government assessments, is important for accountability.

Finance: EX: Care advocates work to ensure that finance earmarked in the NDC, such as finance to enable just transition or labor policies, does not invisibilize care work as climate jobs and actively invests in social protections and care infrastructure.

Implementation: EX: Care advocates and organizations position themselves as potential partners for government implementation of national climate policies related to care.

2 See row 2 of the Care Policy Chart on page 4 for a description of Nationally Determined Contributions.

Key Advocacy Asks Cutting Across Policy Processes:

- Recognize care as critical climate resilience infrastructure.
- Invest in quality care services, including health, education, and other social protections infrastructure.
- Collect and use care-related data and indicators.
- Ensure participation of care workers across stages of the policy cycle, including unpaid and paid care work.

From Care Policy to Climate Action?

Advocates do not need to become climate negotiators or master the entire UNFCCC architecture, but they need to know **which national climate processes determine priorities, budgets, projects, indicators, and institutional responsibilities**. There are many climate policy processes where interventions around the importance of care is not only possible, but necessary. These policy processes exist at the global, regional and national level, often with interlinkages and strategic openings for advocates to push for their priorities on funding, initiatives and implementation; let's examine some of the most consequential.

Climate Policy Process

Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)

What is it?	National document setting national climate priorities, mandated to be submitted every five years by Parties under the UNFCCC (though their timeframes for implementation are longer).
Why does this process matter?	Seen as national "roadmaps" for how countries will achieve the Paris Agreement goals, including emissions reductions, economic transitions, and finance priorities.
When and how can care advocates engage?	Engage in the next NDC revision cycle, which will begin in 2027 (in order to influence the decision in the Global Stocktake). Provide robust evidence on the importance of care integration to national health, adaptation, just transition, labor goals in order to shape existing NDC sections, and for care to hold its own focus.

What is the current integration of care, and what opportunity for care advocacy is there? *(including examples of evidence)*	Varies across NDCs, only a handful mention care economy, though many include mention of social protections and gender, which could serve as advocacy openings. NDCs should, according to the Paris Agreement, "include information on the planning processes that the Party undertook to prepare its nationally determined contribution and, if available, on the Party's implementation plans, including, as appropriate: (i) Domestic institutional arrangements, public participation and engagement with local communities and Indigenous peoples, in a gender-responsive manner." Decision 2/CMA.7 both recognises care as part of just transition and encourages countries to include just transition pathways in their NDCs. As countries look to include just transition in their next round of NDCs, this is a clear opportunity both to concretise care within national articulations of JT and to ensure its presence in NDCs.

Climate Policy Process

National climate assessments and evidence processes*

What is it?	National assessments of climate risks, vulnerabilities, impacts, economic and social intersections that inform climate policy and planning at a national level. Often have risk and sectoral focuses. Vary by methodology/scope.
Why does this process matter?	Assessment processes often determine what governments define as climate risks and priorities, which can shape national adaptation planning, investments, and finance. If care systems are absent from the assessment purview, they will be absent from prioritization in policy.
When and how can care advocates engage?	Participate during the evidence generation and assessment period, which often includes consultation and submission processes, as well as expert input. Partner with academics, research institutions, stats agencies and women's groups to ensure care is a central part of the data assessed.
What is the current integration of care, and what opportunity for care advocacy is there? *(including examples of evidence)*	Care is rarely integrated in national assessments, though it may be marginally included in assessments of labor markets and gender balances in energy labor sectors. There is an opportunity to generate evidence for assessments in the form of time-use surveys, health data, gender impacts, gendered labor and economic impacts, etc. and beyond to shape national policy processes. The Belem Gender Action Plan has two particularly relevant deliverables at the national level, prescribing "Analyses, assessments and mapping of key sectors and institutions that are critical to gender-responsive climate policy and action," and "Inclusion of information on gender-responsive climate policies, plans, strategies and actions, as reported by Parties in regular reports and communications under the UNFCCC and in national and sectoral plans."

***Submissions due March 2027—national assessments on care work in the context of gender and climate.**

One of the most pivotal aspects of the new Belém Gender Action Plan (GAP) is a national assessment process which will come in March 2027. Adopted by parties to the UNFCCC at COP30, Activity A.3.9 of the GAP invites submissions on the findings of national assessments of relevant issues, including, health, violence against women and girls, and care work in the context of gender and climate change. With submissions due early next year, it is one of the earliest deliverables of the GAP, this process can help shape the evidence base for future implementation, financing, and follow-up activities. With one of the categories explicitly focusing on care work in the context of gender and climate, this provides an unprecedented opportunity to directly shape countries' assessments as part of the submission. Rather than having to advocate for care to be a part of national climate assessments at all, this particular opportunity for assessment will invite care advocates to directly shape questions of methodology, evidence, and analysis as part of the UNFCCC GAP submission process. This can be done through official government submissions as well as actually submitting your own, organizationally or individually.

Climate Policy Process

National Adaptation Plans (NAPs)

What is it?	National planning processes that identify medium- and long-term adaptation priorities and implementation strategies. Countries are encouraged, but not required, under the Paris Agreement to develop and periodically update NAPs.
Why does this process matter?	NAPs guide adaptation investments, donor support, project pipelines, and sectoral implementation across government on all things related to national adaptation.
When and how can care advocates engage?	Engage during NAP preparation, sector consultations, monitoring and evaluation design, and revision cycles. Work with ministries responsible for health, social protection, gender, local government, and finance to highlight care as adaptation infrastructure.
What is the current integration of care, and what opportunity for care advocacy is there? *(including examples of evidence)*	Adaptation infrastructure ranges depending on national context and priorities, with health and adaptation systems only sometimes considering care infrastructure as essential. Countries are also encouraged to integrate Just Transition considerations into NAPs, with the Just Transition Work Programme (JTWP) dialogue reports recognizing care as particularly important to adaptation.

Climate Policy Process

Climate finance planning and projects

What is it?	National climate finance strategies and project pipelines, including, for developing countries, proposals to multilateral climate funds such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF), Adaptation Fund (AF), multilateral development banks, and bilateral donors.
Why does this process matter?	These processes are part of determining which projects, particularly in UNFCCC developing countries, receive climate finance and where resources are allocated.
When and how can care advocates engage?	Engage in climate finance planning and "readiness" processes, including in project origination and development, demand meaningful stakeholder engagement and participate in consultations, and work with civil society observers advocating within climate fundsAs priorities are developed, advocate for care infrastructure as a climate solution as well as part of every climate project.
What is the current integration of care, and what opportunity for care advocacy is there? *(including examples of evidence)*	Climate finance mechanisms and projects rarely specifically fund care infrastructure or scale initiatives that recognize care work as climate work, though there is funding of projects with related considerations of health and social protections. While there is growing attention to the barriers that prohibit women in particular from participating equally in project consultation, employment, and decision-making, with a commensurate push for better representation, advocating for the care infrastructure that should be in place to enable such participation can be a key entry point.

Climate Policy Process

Just Transition strategies**

What is it?	Determine national priorities around labor transitions and investments in lower carbon economies. Within the UNFCCC, the Just Transition Work Program is currently setting some of these global priorities, but countries also may produce national plans.
Why does this process matter?	JT strategies speak to transformation of entire economies away from fossil fuels and towards low-carbon, socially and economically just work and economies, a key entry point for care advocacy.
When and how can care advocates engage?	Engagement with governments on JT plans and strategies, leveraging paragraph 12 from the COP30 JTWP decision, which affirms the importance of including care work and informal work as part of just transition.

What is the current integration of care, and what opportunity for care advocacy is there? *(including examples of evidence)*	Some minimal but hard-fought recognition of care work and investment in care work as a low-carbon work sector in some national JT conversations.

***Just Transition Work Program and COP30 Decision**

A key avenue for care advocacy in the UNFCCC centers around is Decision 2/CMA.7. This decision explicitly recognizes care as part of just transition. This recognition is a strong mandate for the inclusion of care in national just transition strategies, and should be leveraged by care advocates in their work.

Paragraph 12 of the decision outlines a long and powerful list of principles for just transition, including the importance of social protection systems, the informal economy, the care economy, and of gender equality in just transitions.

Because just transition is described and elaborated in the decision text in this broad, care-inclusive sense, where the decision later mentions just transition, it should be understood as referring to the same holistic and care-inclusive conception of just transition established earlier in the text, rather than a more narrow understanding. So where the decision encourages countries to include just transition within NDCs, NAPs and Long-Term Low Greenhouse Gas Emission Development Strategy (LT-LEDS), this can be understood and advocated as a mandate for care in these national plans.

While the text also acknowledges that just transition pathways should be nationally determined, and governments have the right to define just transition for their own national contexts, care advocates should use the COP30 decision text to push for a more holistic national articulation of just transition that includes care. Tactics could include: 1) citing the decision text as precedent language when pushing for a care-inclusive just transition, and 2) reminding governments that they agreed this decision on just transition—including care—and are therefore accountable to it.

Climate Policy Process

Climate-health planning

What is it?	National policies and action plans addressing the health impacts of climate change, including climate-resilient health systems, heat action plans, disease surveillance and action plans, and health adaptation planning. While there is no health- specific negotiation track within the UNFCCC, climate-health is a cross-cutting theme in climate, UNFPA, other multilateral fora.
Why does this process matter?	Climate-health planning at a national and global level informs adaptation investments, emergency preparedness, and health sector budgets.
When and how can care advocates engage?	Engage with ministries of health, public health institutions and organizations, and climate-health planning processes. Contribute evidence on care needs during climate shocks and the role of community health and care workers as crucial actors in disaster response and adaptation infrastructure.
What is the current integration of care, and what opportunity for care advocacy is there? *(including examples of evidence)*	Climate-health strategies may focus on the climate crisis' impact on health systems while overlooking broader care infrastructure and care systems. Opportunity to integrate paid and unpaid care work, strengthen community care services, support care workers as national health policy.

Climate Policy Process

Disaster Risk and Reduction (DRR) planning

What is it?	National and global plans, including the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, which aim to decrease risk and impacts on lives, livelihoods and health from extreme weather disasters.
Why does this process matter?	Determines policy priorities and how resources are distributed in disaster response and planning, including addressing differentiated and gendered impacts in disasters.
When and how can care advocates engage?	Strong evidence demonstrates how disasters increase demands across multiple forms of care work, underscoring the need to integrate care systems and care infrastructure into shock-responsive social protection systems and to ensure that care is a central consideration in risk assessment, preparedness, and disaster response.

What is the current integration of care, and what opportunity for care advocacy is there? *(including examples of evidence)*	The Sendai Gender Action Plan (GAP), launched in 2024 by UNDRR to embed gender equality in disaster planning and policies, has integrated care substantially: through the text mentions care professionals as key actors for implementation of the GAP, includes references to child-care services, psychosocial care services and age-responsive care services, and contains a specific dedicated action towards unpaid care and domestic work. Significant opportunity for advocacy pathway through DRR policies to enhance support and protections for care workers as well as their leadership in preparedness and planning.

Climate Policy Process

Local and subnational climate plans

What is it?	Vary widely in form, scope and influence—can be climate strategies developed by cities, states, provinces, and municipalities to reduce emissions, adapt to extreme weather and climate impacts, and build resilient cities and sectors, and also respond to shocks and disasters.
Why does this process matter?	Local governments control local care services, including local health care infrastructure, localized responses to extreme weather events, and some levels of social protections offered.
When and how can care advocates engage?	Determine advocacy pathways for shaping local and subnational climate policy processes, including opportunities for consultation, assessment, providing evidence and data, and implementation.

Annex of other resources

- The climate–care nexus: Addressing the linkages between climate change and women's and girls' unpaid care, domestic, and communal work, UN Women
- Climate and Care Work: Integrated Solutions for Intersecting Crises, Asia Foundation
- The Climate-Care Nexus: A Conceptual Framework, Southern Centre for Inequality Studies
- Centring Care in Climate Finance: A Feminist Blueprint for Adaptation, Resilience, and Climate Justice, Climate and Care Initiative
- Mapping the Climate–Care Nexus in the WANA Region , The Asfari Institute for Civil Society & Citizenship
- Integrating care and climate adaptation into a holistic fiscal framework at the country level, The Brookings Institution
- Care services support effective climate adaptation: Mapping care within National Adaptation Plans and Nationally Determined Contributions, The Brookings Institution
- Rethinking the connections between care and climate: a nexus approach, AVINA
- Cambio Climáco: Cuidados & Gestión de Riesgos Naturales, Red Juvenil de Derechos Humanos