



WOMEN'S LEGAL CENTRE

WLC STATEMENT

WOMEN'S LEGAL CENTRE WELCOMES THE RECOGNITION OF AN INTERNATIONAL DAY OF CARE AND SUPPORT. MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE TO ENSURE THE RECOGNITION OF CARE AS WORK AND THE RIGHT TO CARE AND SUPPORT.

On 24 July 2023, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution in recognition of the role that care work plays in our society and highlighted, the fact that it is disproportionately done by women and girls, that this care burden amounts to discrimination, and that the work of care is far too often unrecognised, undervalued, and unremunerated.

Care work is accepted to refer to “domestic work (meal preparation, cleaning, washing clothes, water and fuel collection) and direct care of persons (including children, older persons and persons with disabilities, as well as able-bodied adults) carried out in homes and communities”, and voluntary community work. These activities are considered work because theoretically a third person could be paid to perform them and generally, women commit substantially more time than men to unpaid care work and have a greater likelihood of having periods of absence from formal employment due to such work.

On 29 October 2023, we commemorate the first International Day of Care and Support, and within the South African context, we wish to draw attention to the following:

There is a need to advance a future where care is no longer a burden borne by women and girls, but rather a collective responsibility shared by all. We therefore recognise the important role that care plays in our homes, communities and broader society and call for the societal redistribution of care work and the creation of supportive infrastructures that enables everyone to participate fully in social, political, and economic life. Women all around the world deserve to be free from the discriminatory

stereotypes and expectations that their roles are confined to care. We reject the notion that the home is a private space where rights to social protection, labour and the right to equality and dignity do not exist.

We recognise that care work such as domestic work is almost exclusively done by women of colour and that these women face multiple intersecting forms of discrimination. Their work and labour is deserving of recognition, contributes value to our society and our economy and they should enjoy access to the same rights as other workers.

We recognise that women are largely responsible for the provision of care in our public and private health care systems. That these women have the right to work in just and favourable conditions and that community health care workers are entitled to have their work recognised and remunerated. It is only through the recognition of the rights of those who care for us that we will ensure the full realisation of the right to access and receive comprehensive health care.

We therefore call on the state to invest in and commit to developing the care economy and to create and implement policy frameworks that speak to the lived reality of South African women. Our economic policies and social security protections must become more gender-responsive, disability-inclusive, and age-sensitive. We must reframe the care economy and the value that it contributes to society while putting in place support systems that seek to recognise, reduce, redistribute reward and represent the betterment of us all.