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Open Letter to Governments - A Care Income Now!

Global Women's Strike (GWS) and Women of Colour GWS

Every day and in every emergency, unwaged or low waged caregivers, urban and rural, mostly women, often immigrant women, struggle to protect and care for people of every age and condition. But this work is kept invisible and therefore there is never a relief package from governments for caregivers, only more work, especially with the advent of Covid-19.

In 1980, the ILO estimated that women did 2/3 of the world's work for 5% of its income. Today women and girls do more than three-quarters of all unpaid care work – a total of 12.5 billion hours a day.

The coronavirus pandemic came on top of the climate pandemic, the poverty pandemic, the war pandemic and the rape and domestic violence pandemics which have hit single mother families, ill, disabled and older people hardest. It is exposing weaknesses in our ability to resist and survive physically and financially – from immune systems already compromised by poverty, discrimination, pollution, war, occupation, displacement and other violence to inadequate healthcare and inadequate incomes, especially in the

Global South, in communities of colour in the North, and among refugees everywhere.

In response to the virus, country after country has been shut down – from workplaces to schools and transport – and proposals to replace lost wages are being debated. These drastic measures show that governments can take swift action and find money to deal with "emergencies" – if they want to. At this critical moment, we must insist collectively on what we need. We fear that governments may use increased emergency powers to transfer wealth from taxpayers to corporations, and even impose further controls, surveillance and restrictions on our movements and our lives well after this pandemic is over.

The market values unwaged work at $10.8 trillion but never suggests that women should get any of it. Instead we are advised to get an education and a better paid job. We of course have a right to that. But it does not deal with the indispensable work of life and survival – from breastfeeding to elder care. Only increasing the status, power and income of caregivers can do that.

In the 80s, the Women Count – Count Women's Work petition issued by the International Wages for Housework Campaign gave voice of a hidden mass movement for recognition of this work. It was signed by 1,200 organizations representing millions of women worldwide, resulting in the 1995 UN decision that governments measure and value unwaged work in national accounts.

The Green New Deal for Europe (http://www.gndforeurope.com/) takes this forward. It looks at what work is needed for social and environmental wellbeing, and what work is not, and proposes a Care Income as a key part of its programme for climate justice. At

last protecting people and protecting the Earth can be equated and prioritized over the uncaring market – a major step in transforming the world and saving it. We need this everywhere.

We demand a CARE INCOME across the planet for all those, of every gender, who care for people, the urban and rural environment, and the natural world.

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https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfJS_qM-zyku4ig2YajtyO1BLOSTu4da0u7__BlQup-7fGIhw/viewform