

# How can businesses support care economy enterprises across the value chain?



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**Investing in the care economy is investing in people, prosperity and the planet. The scale of the transformation needed requires urgent public investment. But it also requires collaboration and co-responsibility between businesses, social entrepreneurs, investors and the public sector. It requires shifting social norms that devalue care work and assign it to women and girls. The care society we seek to create requires everyone.**

—Dr Carolina Robino, Senior Programme Specialist, Sustainable and Inclusive Economies, International Development Research Centre

## Key definitions

*\*\* This report is focussing on small- and medium-sized enterprises and social enterprises in the care economy, referred to in this report as 'care enterprises'*

### The care economy

The paid and unpaid, formal and informal domestic work and care of people, including children, the elderly, the disabled, and dependents with other care needs<sup>1</sup>

### Care enterprise

A small- or medium-sized social enterprise or business focussed on recognising, reducing, rewarding or redistributing care work.

### Multi-National Corporation (MNC)

A company that has business operations in at least one country other than its home country

### Social enterprise

A social impact SME, or social enterprise, is an operator in the social economy whose main objective is to have a social (or environmental) impact rather than to make a profit for their owners or shareholders.<sup>2</sup>

### Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs)

Enterprises which employ fewer than 250 people. SMEs are further subdivided into micro-enterprises (fewer than 10 employees), small enterprises (10 to 49 employees), and medium-sized enterprises (50 to 249 employees)<sup>3</sup>.





***Homely** is the first on-demand based marketplace in Mexico to match trusted cleaners with households and businesses in an easier, safer and faster way while increasing incomes and access to state benefits for cleaners. Engaging companies to use our services has been key to helping us achieve the scale we believe is possible. I encourage more organisations to support care enterprises, because they positively impact everyone in society.*

—Melina Cruz Villafaña, Co-Founder, Homely



# 01. Foreword

**As** a student nurse in 2017, I came face to face with the harsh realities of long-term hospital stays and very expensive hospital care.

This was where my journey in the care economy began and where I saw first-hand how this critical work, which underpins our economies and daily lives, is so often underpaid and undervalued. I knew then that I wanted to change things, and it is what drove me to create Bena Care, a social enterprise based in Nairobi, Kenya.

At Bena Care, we are passionate about providing quality and affordable care for patients with life-limiting illnesses at home. We are building a large network of healthcare workers across our platform that we connect to patients near them. To reach very low-income areas, we also provide training for family caregivers backed by service monitoring and clinical care. Most caregivers in these contexts are untrained women, mothers, wives, daughters or daughters-in-law. At the cost of \$1-2 per day, family caregivers are able to more confidently provide supportive care for their patients and peace of mind for family members, some of whom are able to return to their income-generating activities.

When I started out as a student, I did not have access to knowledge and skills related to starting and running a business. And, like more than 80% of women entrepreneurs in Sub-Saharan Africa, I faced many social and financial challenges and a lack of adequate networks. But as we began to gather more impact and traction, we were able to attract the attention of Standard Chartered's 'Women in Tech' programme. This gave us the support we needed to grow. We were able to access mentorship, funding opportunities and other networks. We are now on the path to sustainability.

When I look back to 2017, Bena Care was just a company trying to lessen the burden of healthcare for communities. But now, through the partnerships that we have gathered along the way and our networks of healthcare workers, it has become a movement – a force that is trying to bring change to our broken and terribly inefficient healthcare system.

This report is about small enterprises like mine that are addressing the care needs of low-income people, and that are viable and valuable investment opportunities. It focusses on the vast potential for multinational companies to support

care economy entrepreneurs across their value chains. Investment in the care economy is an opportunity that could help businesses like mine thrive, create millions of jobs, and radically improve the quality of life for individuals worldwide.

I encourage you to delve into this potential and be part of building a future where the care economy takes its rightful place as a cornerstone of our global economic framework.



**Naom Monari**, CEO,  
Bena Care Ltd, Kenya



Photo credit: Bena Care Ltd



## 02. Why this report?

Everybody depends upon the care economy in some way or another throughout their working lives.

Access to childcare, support for elderly relatives, and domestic help in the home enable people to survive, thrive and participate in the global economy. Yet this work is undervalued, underpaid and disproportionately undertaken by women. Public and private provision of care services is fragmented and insufficient to meet growing demands. Whilst greater public investment is urgently required, innovative social entrepreneurs focussing on the care economy are seeking to address the gap, but they require investment and support from companies and investors to reach the necessary scale.

Business Fights Poverty is therefore pleased to be able to contribute to an [innovative three-year programme](#), supported by Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC), to identify, document and amplify impactful solutions by social entrepreneurs that recognise, reduce, redistribute and reward unpaid and paid care and domestic work<sup>4</sup>.

This report is a small contribution to IDRC's wider programme. This report focusses on how multinational companies can support care economy entrepreneurs across their value chains. In the spirit of collaboration, five Business Fights Poverty partner companies agreed to share their thoughts in a series of

in-depth interviews. The report draws out some emerging insights from these conversations and outlines a framework for action. It concludes with a directory of care economy SMEs operating in Africa, Latin America and Asia that have been identified by the IDRC-supported [Care Economy Knowledge Hub consortia](#)<sup>5</sup>.



***Unpaid care and domestic work is arguably one of the most fundamental reasons why achieving gender equality in labour markets and in the workplace remains elusive.***



## 03. Introduction

The global economic system is underpinned by many thousands of hours of “invisible” care work that is often unpaid, underpaid or undervalued.

The employees' homes and offices need cleaning; breakfasts, lunches and dinners need to be provided; and employees need care for their loved ones in order to go to work, be they children, elderly parents or disabled family members.

Globally, women perform 75% of such work, dedicating, on average, 4 hours and 25 minutes daily to it – more than three times men's average of 1 hour and 23 minutes<sup>6</sup>. The amount of unpaid care and domestic work undertaken by women peaks during the working ages of 25–44 years. Indeed, 606 million women of working age perform unpaid care work on a full-time basis, compared with just 41 million men<sup>7</sup>. It is arguably one of the most fundamental reasons why achieving gender equality in labour markets and in the workplace remains elusive.

Those that are paid to undertake domestic and care work are among the most vulnerable groups of workers. Of the 67 million domestic workers in the world, over 80% are estimated to be women. They work in private households, often with no employment contracts. A recent ILO report found that over 94% of domestic workers do not receive comprehensive social protection benefits, such as sick pay or maternity leave<sup>8</sup>. They often face very low wages, excessively long hours, and are vulnerable to physical, mental and sexual abuse. Migrant domestic workers are at particular risk as they have even less access to any forms of state protection.

A recent report from 2X Global illustrates that the demand for care is increasing rapidly. For instance, demand for paid care services is projected to rise from 8.7% of global GDP in 2015 to 14.9% in 2030. Ageing populations, displacement and health issues stemming from climate change,





**Oxfam have estimated that 12.5 billion hours of care work are completed for free by women and girls every day, representing at least \$10.8 trillion of value to the economy every year.**



changing family structures and care needs, and increased care dependency ratios, combined with increased levels of women's employment in certain countries, have created demand for alternative (paid) care provisions. The number of care recipients is projected to reach 2.3 billion by 2030, a 10% increase from 2015<sup>9</sup>.

In addition to an increasing need for more and better services that support the care economy and that recognise and reward caregivers, there is also evidence to suggest that investment in care infrastructure represents a huge opportunity. One study states that if investment in the care economy matched that of the construction sector in countries in emerging economies, it would create over 27 million new jobs<sup>10</sup>. An ILO global review estimated that investment in gender-equal leave, universal

childcare and long-term care services could generate up to 299 million jobs by 2035. Closing these policy gaps would require an annual investment of US\$5.4 trillion (equivalent to 4.2% of total annual GDP) by 2035, some of which could be offset by an increase in tax revenue from the additional earnings and employment<sup>11</sup>.

Despite the opportunity, in most countries the provision of care services and infrastructure is underfunded and fragmented. An ILO report that looked at 82 countries of varying economic status estimates that less than 0.3% of annual GDP is spent on childcare (well below the OECD-recommended 1%) and 0.6% on long-term care<sup>12</sup>. In some lower- and middle-income countries, these figures are much lower – Indonesia, for example, spends only 0.04% of GDP on early-years care and development<sup>13</sup>. When it comes to

private provision, a recent IFC study on childcare in Nigeria found that 76% of private childcare providers faced challenges in accessing formal financing. The same study found that only 5% of Nigeria's private sector employers invest in childcare, despite 67% of working parents reporting they were more productive at work when they had easier access to childcare<sup>14</sup>.

Building a stronger care economy ecosystem clearly requires both public and private provision. Social enterprises that focus on the care economy are a key piece of this jigsaw, and finding ways to scale their efforts is vital, which is why this report is focussed on exploring the possibilities of working with multinational companies.

Whilst multinationals and small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have a long history of working together, with many companies depending on them as distributors or customers, examples of companies using the services of care

economy enterprises are few and far between. However, as our interviews show, companies are increasingly looking at the care economy. Some are approaching it through the lens of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, creating more family-friendly workplace policies to recruit and retain staff. Others are being forced to comply with new regulations – for example, in Turkey and Bangladesh, factories with more than 50 employees are required by law to provide creche facilities. Many companies support entrepreneurship programmes that could integrate a more specific focus on care economy entrepreneurs. As well, companies outsourcing cleaning services can partner with care economy SMEs that are investing in professionalising and making care work decent work.

So, whilst much of the work is nascent, avenues of opportunity do exist for greater action.

## What is the care economy?

The paid and unpaid, formal and informal domestic work and care of people, including children, the elderly, the disabled, and dependents with other care needs

### Work in the home:

Domestic chores such as cooking, washing, cleaning, collecting water or fuel, or taking care of family members, including children, the elderly, and those who are ill or who have disabilities. This work is usually invisible, undervalued and unpaid.

### Work outside of the home:

Paid work taking care of persons or households outside of one's direct family. This includes cleaning and domestic work, child and elder care, and care for those who are ill or who have disabilities. This work is often undervalued and underpaid, without a fair work framework in place (e.g. lack of contract, workers' rights, paid leave, etc).

The care economy can also be understood using the UN's "3 R's" framework. This framework has evolved over recent years to also include Recognition of care and Representation of care workers in shaping the policies that affect them<sup>15</sup>. Most care enterprises are

focussing on solutions to: Reduce, Reward and Redistribute care work.

**Reduce** — Products and initiatives that reduce the time and burden of unpaid care and domestic work

**Reward** — Products, services and initiatives that ensure that care and domestic workers are paid fairly and can progress in their careers, providing them with financial reward and security

**Redistribute** — Services and initiatives that redistribute care work from individuals to public and private sector entities, and redistribute care and domestic work between women and men within the household



## Examples of companies that are addressing the caring needs of their employees and workers across the value chain

(but not necessarily with support from social enterprises)

Workplace	Supply Chain	Consumer Market	Philanthropy
<p><b>Deloitte's</b> employees are eligible for 16 weeks of paid leave for caregiving responsibilities<sup>16</sup>. By adding support for eldercare, spousal care, and childcare beyond birth, the leave programme provides employees the time they need to focus on their families at important times<sup>17</sup>.</p> <p><b>Vodafone</b> has instituted a policy of 16 weeks maternity pay across its markets and includes returning to work on reduced hours for the first 6 months. A report by KPMG found that global businesses could save up to \$19 billion if they adopted similar policies<sup>18</sup>.</p>	<p>The <b>RainForest Alliance</b> wanted to go beyond certification to find support systems that would help prohibit child labour in Guatemalan coffee-growing communities. They partnered with FunCafé (a Foundation of the National Coffee Association) to scale up their Coffee Kindergartens (ages 4–6yrs) and Coffee Camps (7–13 yrs). These camps recognise that the coffee harvest coincides with school vacations and that parents have nowhere to leave their children.</p> <p>During the 2021–2022 coffee harvest, 82 centres served 1,716 children. The cost of providing the camps is supported by buyers who either make a cash or in-kind investment<sup>19</sup>.</p>	<p>Laundry brand <b>Ariel</b> India launched their #ShareTheLoad campaign to highlight inequalities in the household. A series of adverts were made. Prior to the campaign, a survey found that 79% of men thought that household chores were a woman's job and outside work was a man's job. By 2018, this had dropped to 52%<sup>20</sup>.</p> <p>P&amp;G's shampoo brand <b>Pantene</b> launched the "Dad do's" advertising campaign, which showed American footballers doing their children's hair. The ad essentially encouraged more equal parenting time to be spent on children's grooming. #DadDo was exceptionally viral, trending organically on Facebook for 48 hours after launch. The commercial and YouTube <i>how to</i> series inspired 250 million #DadDo social media impressions and 1.68 billion media impressions<sup>21</sup>.</p>	<p><b>IKEA's</b> social enterprise accelerator programme focuses on supporting SMEs, many of whose products are then directly sold by the business. It also chose to support the 'Homely App', Mexico's first platform to enable domestic workers to have a safe, steady and fair job, and connect them with clients. Since 2016, Homely has supported 695 domestic workers throughout three different states in Mexico. Domestic workers can increase their income between 2x and 5x by collaborating with the platform<sup>22</sup>.</p>

The business case for addressing the care economy include:

- ♦ **Recruitment and retention** – attracting the best and most diverse staff and savings on recruitment costs when returning mothers or carers leave. Companies are increasingly judged on their commitment to being family-friendly workplaces – in the UK, a business can be certified as "Carer Friendly"<sup>23</sup>.
- ♦ **Regulatory frameworks:** state requirements for provision and subsidies for employees – including, for example, tax-free childcare vouchers
- ♦ **Risk management:** better provision of care can reduce risks – including, for example, child labour in supply chains – and avoid mistreatment and irresponsible recruitment of domestic workers by staff
- ♦ **Human rights and labour standards:** breastfeeding rooms and maternity rights are often part of social compliance requirements in supply chains
- ♦ **Innovation:** new products and services targeted at men as well as women offer new opportunities to evolve customer bases and challenge stereotypes



*Without support, around 250,000 employees each year leave work due to the challenges of juggling work and care. With the average age of taking on caring responsibilities 45–64 years, it's likely these are some of your most valued and senior staff. Being Carer Friendly makes great business sense.*

—Forward Carers, UK  
(Certifiers of the Carer Friendly Commitment Mark)

*Woman taking care of child at UPAVIM's child care center. La Esperanza, Villanueva, Guatemala. Photo credit: IDRC / James Rodriguez, Panos Pictures*



# 04. The benefits of collaboration between global corporations and social enterprises

According to one recent study, there are now 11 million social enterprises operating globally, making them one of the “fastest growing global movements of our time”<sup>24</sup>.

Companies are increasingly interested in finding ways to work alongside social enterprises. They can devise local solutions for complex challenges, have a higher risk tolerance, and can reach new customer bases or demographics. An MNC can offer scale, financing and be a test-bed to trial new innovations in their supply chains or with their existing customer bases. Business Fights Poverty and Acumen have written previously about the emerging types of partnerships that global companies and social enterprises can develop for mutual benefit,<sup>25</sup> described below.

**SKILLS PARTNERSHIPS** leverage the considerable resources of global corporations to address the limited resources of social enterprises, contributing to employee engagement and development for the corporation and business benefits for the social enterprise, depending on the partnership focus.

**CHANNEL PARTNERSHIPS** bring in-depth insight and targeted products and services of social enterprises to the large-scale supply and/or distribution networks of global corporations, helping social enterprises achieve scale and global corporations to strengthen their supply chains and/or sales.

**VENTURE PARTNERSHIPS** combine the risk tolerance of social enterprises with the resources of global corporations to develop new products and services – and even entirely new business models – through investments, joint ventures and acquisitions.

## THE BENEFITS OF COLLABORATION BETWEEN SOCIAL ENTERPRISES AND GLOBAL CORPORATIONS

SOCIAL ENTERPRISES	BENEFITS OF COLLABORATION	GLOBAL CORPORATIONS
<b>RISK TOLERANCE</b> Can quickly test innovative new approaches with uncertain returns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New products + services</li> <li>• New business models</li> </ul>	<b>OPPORTUNITY COST OF INVESTMENT</b> Prohibitive hurdle rates often discourage radical innovation
<b>IN-DEPTH INSIGHT</b> Understand the aspirations, incentives, disincentives, and daily lives of the poor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer &amp; market insight</li> </ul>	<b>LIMITED INSIGHT</b> May understand what sells + what doesn't (or what is offered + what isn't) but not necessarily why
<b>SMALL SCALE</b> Limited operations, value chains + customer networks, and higher operating costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New channels + customers</li> </ul>	<b>LARGE SCALE</b> Extensive operations, value chains + customer networks, in multiple countries, and economies of scale
<b>LIMITED RESOURCES</b> Significant cash constraints, which contribute to staffing constraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employee engagement &amp; development</li> <li>• Stronger supply chains</li> </ul>	<b>CONSIDERABLE RESOURCES</b> Budgets + staff often with significant experience + qualifications, can be allocated for strategic support

Source: Business Fights Poverty and Acumen

Many companies have long had an interest in supporting SMEs more broadly, given their central role in the wider economy. They make up over 90% of all firms, accounting on average for 60–70% of total employment and 50% of GDP. SMEs have often supported MNCs – for example, as smallholders, distributors, processors or retailers.

As yet few, if any, examples exist whereby MNCs and social enterprises or SMEs have worked together to intentionally tackle the care economy. The following insights and framework for action outline a way forward that could deliver benefits for both companies and care enterprises.



## 05. Insights on how MNCs can support care economy enterprises

The care economy in general and support for care enterprises in particular are new issues for multinational companies.

Five Business Fights Poverty partner companies agreed to openly and honestly explore this issue with us for this report. In order to tease out ideas, the interviews sought to look at both how the MNCs support entrepreneurship and how they are approaching workplace policies and practices relevant to caregiving. Four overarching insights emerged, and practical ideas are included in the subsequent Framework for Action.

### INSIGHT 1: Companies need to better understand how care impacts their business.

All the companies interviewed were involved to some degree in supporting employees, entrepreneurs or communities to access care. However, this was only explicitly intentional when citing family-friendly workplace policies. Any links to care enterprises are happening unintentionally – for example, through support for women entrepreneurs (who tend to develop more socially orientated businesses, including care enterprises)

or through water and sanitation infrastructure projects, which can reduce the time spent on care work. By increasing awareness and more explicitly understanding their impact on the care economy across the value chain, an MNC can become a co-responsible care actor along with public and private sector partners.



*We are always looking for ways to equip employees and host communities with what they need to manage things at home – whether it's electricity or internet connectivity or providing more parenting tools and resources to support their children at all stages of their development.*

—Zaheera Soomar,  
Anglo American



*The issues we are working on so closely intersect with the care economy. For example, we work with social enterprise Bhumijo, who provide public toilets in Bangladesh. They are about so much more than sanitation – providing people, especially caregivers, with dignity and social mobility, allowing them to stay out the house for longer.*

—Lisa Hawkes, Unilever



### INSIGHT 2: Workplace policies offer a springboard to engage with care enterprises.

All the companies had a strong commitment to family-friendly policies – predominantly regarding childcare, but also, in one case, backup support for carers. None of the companies are currently procuring the services of care enterprises to deliver these benefits packages, but all had a willingness to explore how to in the future. Hurdles to making this happen were noted. For example, companies might face challenges around the procuring services of care enterprises directly and it was suggested that there might be a need for such enterprises to be recommended via agencies/ third parties rather than hired directly. Similarly, there was an appetite to explore how companies could sign post staff to care enterprises to help employees responsibly source domestic workers, and a recognition that office cleaning services could be provided by care enterprises.

However, most interviewees felt unable to comment comprehensively on these areas as it fell outside of their remit. This suggests that conversations between human resources, procurement, human rights, and social impact teams could help identify more opportunities for mutually beneficial synergies.



*For colleagues that are relocating, we do provide information to employees when they migrate to work in a particular market – such as information on housing available. If there was an agency that could vet potential workers (such as domestic help or childcare or eldercare providers) and if they were female-owned businesses, then it could be quite an attractive offer to both local and relocated colleagues.*

—Natasha Kwakwa,  
Standard Chartered





### INSIGHT 3: Companies that rely on large numbers of workers in supply chains could help care enterprises achieve scale.

Companies that are reliant on large numbers of low-income workers and customers (e.g. garment workers or small-holder farmers) could help facilitate access to digital tools being created by care enterprises to ensure workers are more aware of state-provided entitlements where they exist, or could help them access low-cost care services.



*It's really exciting that we can be a bridge where workers in our supply chain can, in effect, be a customer base to a social enterprise and their solution. When it comes to care enterprises, I do think there is scope to support such entities, especially if brands came together to use their services.*



—Matthew Davidson,  
Primark

### INSIGHT 4: Philanthropic entrepreneurship programmes could be more focussed on care enterprises.

Four of the five companies interviewed ran substantial entrepreneurship programmes, but none were intentionally supporting care enterprises. Care enterprises need to be made aware of the opportunities provided by various MNC entrepreneurship programmes, and MNCs need to intentionally target more support towards care enterprises. Initiatives such as the Visa Foundation- and IDRC-supported [Asia Pacific Care Accelerator Programme](#) could help further facilitate partnerships between MNCs and entrepreneurs in the care economy, based on their experience of incubating and accelerating care enterprises.



*Depending on the data from our pilot programmes, we may scale childcare as a component of our small business programming in future small business growth programmes. We still have a lot to test and learn in this space and welcome insights from others.*

—Payal Dalal,  
Mastercard Center  
for Inclusive Growth



## Examples of action on the care economy by the interviewees

### SKILLS PARTNERSHIPS

**Standard Chartered's** Futuremakers Women in Tech programme has targeted women, and this has included SMEs like Bena Care in Kenya, which is providing affordable care at home for older people with long-term illness.

**Anglo American** is supporting the development of Early Years Development Centres across South Africa, which are both NGO and SME-run. Quality early-years care is key to both recruiting employees to work in remote mining areas and to enable both parents to work at the mines.

**Mastercard Center for Inclusive Growth** was aware that, given the conflict, childcare and eldercare were huge barriers for displaced Ukrainian women in Poland who were trying to establish their economic livelihoods. Thus, as part of their programme to help these women establish their businesses in Poland, the Mastercard Center offered the women childcare support. The Mastercard Center has subsequently planned for more pilots to test the impact of childcare on the financial health of women entrepreneurs.

### CHANNEL PARTNERSHIPS

**Primark** is piloting a partnership with Indian social enterprise [Haqdarshak](#), which uses technology to help low-income workers access their social protection entitlements.

Through TRANSFORM, a public-private partnership with the UK's FCDO and EY, **Unilever** is partnering with entrepreneurs, including those providing infrastructure that can support carers – such as the toilet company Bhumijo in Bangladesh. Unilever brand Domestos has signed a 3-year deal to advertise with Bhumijo and reach new audiences.



# 06. A framework for MNCs to work with care enterprises across the value chain

On one axis are the three types of partnerships MNCs can explore with social enterprises. These were developed by Business Fights Poverty as part of a report for Acumen. These are the 3 'lenses' through which support can be explored.

Across the other axis sit the three spheres of influence where a company can take action, based on

work by Jane Nelson, Director of the Corporate Responsibility Initiative at Harvard Kennedy School.

The framework is a work in progress and by no means exhaustive, but it starts to illustrate where and how a care strategy that includes engagement with care enterprises could evolve.

Bhumijo toilets Bangladesh, Photo credit TRANSFORM



Actions	CHANNEL	SKILLS	VENTURE
<p><b>CORE BUSINESS</b></p> <p><i>Harness core capabilities and operations, including supply chains.</i></p> <p><i>Deliver through enhanced policies, processes, products, services, technologies, financing mechanisms and business models.</i></p>	<p>Identifying whether employees or supply chain workers could be potential customers or users of care enterprises.</p> <p>Map and assess employee demographics to determine the caregiving needs that workers confront, using existing tools such as staff surveys – and, for supply chains, add questions to existing social compliance data-gathering exercises.</p> <p>Identify if any care enterprises exist to deliver products or services that might address your employees' or supply chain workers' care needs. For example, <a href="#">ATEC</a> provides sustainable, affordable and accessible clean cooking products for the base of the pyramid households in Bangladesh and Cambodia. And <a href="#">Aeiotu</a> in Colombia provides care and education services for children. Use the directory in this report and/or talk to SME specialist organisations, including Acumen, Endeava, Technoserve and Ashoka.</p> <p>Procure services directly or urge for relevant SMEs to be included in existing procurement agencies that companies recommend to employers, e.g. large agencies that support staff needs with regard to housing or relocation; e.g. <a href="#">Hogaru</a>, a digital platform providing cutting-edge technology to find reliable and quality domestic workers in Colombia, or the <a href="#">Cuidarlos</a> app that provides care for the elderly and people with disabilities in Argentina, connecting and managing families, patients and caregivers.</p> <p>Work with suppliers to address practical infrastructure issues that could reduce care workloads, e.g. ensuring any supplier-provided transport to and from work stops at the market; or working with care enterprises that reduce the time spent on domestic chores, e.g. <a href="#">Folia Water Global Inc.</a>, which provides affordable and effective water filtration solutions to low-income communities that lack access to clean drinking water in Bangladesh.</p>	<p>Leverage resources of global corporations to address the limited resources of social enterprises, whilst contributing to employee development for the corporation.</p> <p>Harness core skills of employees to support social enterprises, including via employee engagement programmes and training or development opportunities. Skills that can be shared include networking, marketing, financial, accounting and digital skills – e.g. Unilever and EY staff are matched with relevant social entrepreneurs for 12 months via the <a href="#">TRANSFORM</a> programme.</p> <p>Identify and invest in care enterprises in ways that are mutually beneficial, such as part-funding a creche start-up and scaling them by using their services across multiple locations – e.g. <a href="#">Phulki</a>, which provides affordable daycare facilities for children of low- and middle-income households in urban areas and garment factories in Bangladesh.</p>	<p>Invest in care enterprises in ways that are mutually beneficial – e.g. R&amp;D, test-bed, financing and scaling new business models.</p> <p>For fast-moving consumer goods companies in particular, encourage R&amp;D or innovation departments to design and develop new products or services that might reduce or redistribute care work amongst customers – e.g. partnership between Japanese company LIXIL and WSUP (a water and sanitation social enterprise) that created a new market for well-designed, portable toilets for residents of informal settlements in Ghana.</p>



Actions	CHANNEL	SKILLS	VENTURE
<p><b>PHILANTHROPY / COMMUNITY INVESTMENT</b></p> <p><i>Explore ways to leverage corporate philanthropy and social investment, and ensure that community voices are heard.</i></p>	<p>Provide funds to support care enterprises where supply chain workers or communities are present, fostering a positive impact in the wider community, e.g. <a href="#">AgeWatch Africa Foundation</a>, which provides high-quality care to the elderly in rural Kenya, or <a href="#">Powerstove Energy</a> in Nigeria, which provides cookstoves and biomass pellets for clean household cooking.</p> <p>Partner with academic institutes and initiatives, e.g. the <a href="#">MIT Solve Challenge</a>, to support social norms change that will increase the uptake of care products and services; e.g. despite creche services being provided, many people refuse to use them and expect family members to provide these services for free.</p>	<p>Explicitly support capacity development of social impact entrepreneurs in the care economy – e.g. IDRC and the Vlsa Foundation are supporting the Asia Pacific <a href="#">Care Accelerator Programme</a> to support care enterprises to incubate and scale.</p> <p>Include care enterprises as a specific category in existing or new entrepreneurship programmes – e.g. Ikea's social enterprise accelerator programme supported the <a href="#">Homely</a> app, Mexico's first platform to enable domestic workers to have a safe, steady and fair job, connecting them with clients.</p> <p>Invest in building the skills and qualifications of care providers so that any services used by employees and supply chain workers are of the highest standards – e.g. <a href="#">Onesky</a> trains women operating daycares out of their homes in Vietnam's industrial areas (especially workers who provide caregiving to children of low-income migrant workers).</p>	<p>Consider how company and Foundation investment strategies could invest in funds with a care thesis or have a gender lens with a care focus built in – e.g. The Soros Economic Development Fund (SEDF), the social impact investment arm of the Open Society Foundations which has developed an impact investment strategy in the care economy in Colombia, South Africa and India.</p> <p>Use funds to innovate with care enterprises – e.g. commission research or pilot programmes to test new approaches that could work for the company.</p>
<p><b>POLICY ENGAGEMENT</b></p> <p><i>Engage in policy dialogue, coalition-building, and institution-strengthening partnerships.</i></p>	<p>Advocate for governments to provide employer-supported systems, such as tax-free voucher systems that employees can use for childcare – e.g. in many countries, there is no legal mandate for employer-supported childcare and there are no regulatory incentives.</p> <p>Advocate for high-quality services – e.g. in Kenya, there are no government agencies or private sector associations focussed on the regulation or improvement of informal care centres.</p> <p>Lobby for ESG metrics to include care-related provisions for employees and workers. Report any care-related actions under SDG-5 and -8 reporting in annual company ESG reports.</p> <p>Urge supply chain partners, such as Certification Bodies (e.g. Fair Trade, Rainforest Alliance), Investors (e.g. 2X Criteria), Audit and standard-setting bodies to include requirements for addressing the care needs of workers.</p>	<p>Influence national policies by actively engaging teams (e.g. human rights) in social enterprise / SME platforms that protect care worker rights – e.g. the <a href="#">Fair Employment Foundation</a> in Hong Kong, a recruitment agency that facilitates responsible migration of domestic workers from across Asia; e.g. <a href="#">Homely</a>, a social enterprise in Mexico which advocates for domestic workers' rights in the media, in national and international events, and directly with policymakers.</p>	<p>Advocate for a regulatory environment that supports entrepreneurs, including better access to finance and streamlined operating regulations.</p>

# 07. Directory of care enterprises

This list of care enterprises includes those that have been fully profiled by the Care Economy Knowledge Hub. A more complete list of 165 care enterprises has been mapped by the Hub and can be accessed via this [website](#).

## REGION: AFRICA

CARE SERVICE	INTENDED IMPACT	SOLUTION INCLUDES
<b>Childcare</b>		
<a href="#">Institut Académique des Bébés</a> is a social business that trains care workers in early childhood care in Senegal.	Redistribute Reduce Reward	Skills-building
<a href="#">Kidogo</a> is a non-profit social enterprise that improves access to high-quality, affordable early childhood care & education in Kenya's low-income communities.	Reward Recognise	Skills building B2B
<a href="#">Strong Start</a> is a for-profit company that provides caregivers and domestic staff in Kenya with technical skills training in early childhood development, household management, self-advocacy and job search training.	Recognise Redistribute Reward	Skills-building
The <a href="#">Baby Lounge</a> is a for-profit company that provides childcare services to parents of young children and training courses to childcare professionals.	Redistribute Reduce Reward	Skills-building
The <a href="#">Mother Goose</a> is a community-based organisation that provides childcare and parenting solutions in Kenya.	Recognise Redistribute Reduce Reward	Skills-building Digital platform
<a href="#">Tiny Totos</a> is a social enterprise that aims to improve informal daycare by partnering with private, informal daycare entrepreneurs and delivering training and investment to upgrade standards, foster business sustainability and deliver improved care to children in Kenya and Rwanda.	Reward	Digital platform B2B
<a href="#">Uthabiti</a> is a for-profit entity that exists to accelerate early childhood care, education and development (ECCED) in Africa. It accelerates access to quality and affordable childcare services for all.	Reward Recognise	Skills-building Digital platform
<b>Elderly</b>		
<a href="#">AgeWatch Africa Foundation</a> is a social enterprise whose mission is to provide high-quality care to the elderly in rural Kenya.	Reduce Reward	Skills-building
<b>Health and long-term care</b>		
<a href="#">Through My Eyes</a> is a social enterprise that trains and accredits caregivers to serve children with special needs.	Reduce Reward	Skills-building
<a href="#">Xalco Ltd</a> is a social enterprise that trains and certifies caregivers in Kenya and South Sudan.	Redistribute Reduce Reward	Skills-building



Domestic Work		
<a href="#">Jazza Centre</a> is a for-profit social enterprise that trains and places domestic workers in Kenya.	Reward	Skills-building B2B
<a href="#">Made To Clean</a> is a for-profit company that aims to standardise domestic work in Zimbabwe, by providing training and placements to domestic workers.	Reward	Skill-building B2B
Infrastructure		
<a href="#">Aqua Clara Kenya</a> is a non-profit entity that provides communities with affordable, easy-to-use filters so they can access safe water at home. Aqua Clara's products are used by households, schools and health centres.	Reduce	
<a href="#">Bidhaa Sasa</a> is a for-profit company that supplies a range of products to customers in rural communities of Kenya (e.g. solar lamps, water tanks, cookstoves, etc.)	Reduce	
<a href="#">BURN</a> is a for-profit company that manufactures affordable, clean cookstoves for households in sub-Saharan Africa.	Reduce	
<a href="#">Emerging Cooking Solutions</a> is a for-profit company that manufactures and distributes SupaMoto® clean-burning stoves and biomass cooking fuel for low-income urban families and businesses.	Reduce	
<a href="#">Green Girls Organisation</a> is a non-profit organisation that trains women and girls across African rural communities on generating energy from the sun and waste.	Reduce	
<a href="#">Imvubu Projects</a> is a for-profit enterprise trading as Hippo Roller. The rollers are an appropriate technology solution designed for tough rural conditions where access to water and water infrastructure is unstable.	Redistribute Reduce	
<a href="#">SETECH</a> is a for-profit entity based in Ghana that provides clean cooking and solar lighting solutions to households and women-dominated agro-industries in rural and peri-urban communities.	Reduce	
<a href="#">Powerstove Energy</a> is a social enterprise based in Nigeria that provides cookstoves and biomass pellets for clean household cooking.	Reduce	
<a href="#">Usafi Green Energy Limited</a> is a for-profit company that manufactures and distributes cookstoves and biomass briquettes in Kenya.	Reduce	

## REGION: ASIA

CARE SERVICE	INTENDED IMPACT	SOLUTION INCLUDES
Childcare		
<a href="#">Onesky</a> is a non-profit that trains women operating daycares out of their homes in Vietnam's industrial zones (especially workers who provide caregiving services to children of low-income migrant workers). OneSky also operates in China and Mongolia.	Recognise Reward	Skills-building
<a href="#">Phulki</a> is a non-profit enterprise that provides affordable daycare facilities for children of low- and middle-income households in urban areas of Bangladesh. Phulki has also set up childcare facilities in garment factories in Bangladesh, as they largely employ women.	Redistribute Reduce Reward	Skills-building B2B
Elderly		
<a href="#">AYAT Care</a> provides affordable monthly subscriptions to connect elderly persons with trained, at-home caregivers. Caregivers provide personalised and preventive healthcare, combining mental and physical wellbeing. Trainees are largely school dropouts with limited access to formal jobs, training and certification.	Redistribute Reduce Reward	
<a href="#">Hasu</a> is a for-profit startup that provides digital healthcare solutions for the elderly in Vietnam.	Redistribute Reduce	Digital platform

Domestic Work		
<a href="#">Ayasan</a> is a for-profit company that provides personnel for housework and care work to its customers; it is operational in Vietnam, Indonesia, Laos and Thailand.	Reduce Redistribute Reward	Digital platform
<a href="#">Fair Employment Foundation</a> has a hybrid model that consists of a social business and a registered charity. It has a recruitment agency that supports fair and transparent international migration of caregivers from the Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia.	Recognise Reward	Digital platform B2B
<a href="#">HandyMama</a> is an on-demand home services platform in Bangladesh.	Redistribute Reward	Digital platform B2B
<a href="#">Happy Helpers</a> is a for-profit, women-led enterprise that provides domestic cleaning services to households and companies in Manila, Philippines.	Reward	Skills-building B2B
<a href="#">HelloTask</a> is a for-profit online platform that connects domestic workers to potential employers in Bangladesh.	Reward Reduce Redistribute	Digital platform
<a href="#">JupViec</a> is a platform that recruits, trains and connects domestic workers to customers in Vietnam.	Reduce Redistribute Reward	Skills-building Digital platform
<a href="#">Kiidu's</a> model empowers domestic workers and caregivers with jobs and helps parents in Thailand find personnel such as nannies, tutors, maids, senior caregivers, nurses and drivers.	Reduce Recognise Redistribute	Skills-building Digital platform
Infrastructure		
<a href="#">ATEC</a> is a for-profit entity that provides sustainable, affordable and accessible clean cooking products for base-of-the-pyramid households in Bangladesh and Cambodia.	Reduce	
<a href="#">Eau et Vie</a> is a non-profit that develops water networks in slum areas in Bangladesh and the Philippines to provide affordable and sustainable tap water at home.	Reduce	
<a href="#">Folia Water Global Inc.</a> is a for-profit enterprise that provides affordable and effective water filtration solutions to low-income communities that lack access to clean drinking water.	Reduce	
<a href="#">Komodo Water</a> is a social enterprise that provides access to clean and affordable drinking water in small islands and remote coastal areas of Indonesia.	Redistribute Reduce	
<a href="#">Nazava</a> is a for-profit enterprise that produces affordable gravity-based ceramic household water filters, replacing the need to boil water on wood or LPG. Nazava's headquarters are in Indonesia, and it operates in Indonesia, Ethiopia and Kenya.	Reduce	

## REGION: LATIN AMERICA

CARE SERVICE	INTENDED IMPACT	SOLUTION INCLUDES
Childcare		
<a href="#">aeioTU</a> is a social enterprise that works with public and private actors to provide high-quality, comprehensive care and education to children throughout Colombia.	Reward Redistribute Reduce Recognise	Skills-building B2B
<a href="#">Hipocampus</a> is a social enterprise that provides high-quality and affordable early childhood care and education for working families in Mexico. Hipocampus partners with employers to provide on-site childcare services fully aligned with parents' needs.	Redistribute Reduce	Skills-building B2B



Elderly		
<a href="#">Cuidarlos</a> provides innovative solutions for the care of the elderly and people with disabilities, connecting and managing families, patients, and caregivers in an agile, fast and safe way, without intermediaries.	<b>Redistribute Reduce</b>	<b>Digital platform Skills-building</b>
<a href="#">LivUp</a> is dedicated to prolonging and protecting the vitality of the elderly. This Chilean platform promotes prevention to decrease the need for intensive care.	<b>Reward</b>	<b>Skill-building</b>
Health and long-term care		
<a href="#">Asistta</a> is a Colombian platform that connects health professionals with users who require home services, medicine administration, physiotherapy, respiratory therapy, psychological services, nutrition, speech therapy and nursing. Around 90% of its workforce are women.	<b>Redistribute Reduce Reward</b>	<b>Digital platform</b>
<a href="#">Best Care</a> is a for-profit enterprise that makes healthcare and well-being services accessible to all segments of the population in Latin America, regardless of income, age or health condition.	<b>Redistribute Reduce Reward</b>	
<a href="#">Lazarillo</a> is a Chilean app that helps people with visual disabilities improve their independence with information on their routes to access physical or digital services.	<b>Reduce</b>	<b>Digital platform</b>
Domestic Work		
<a href="#">IMA Limpia</a> is a social enterprise administratively and operationally led by women who have served as domestic workers, providing cleaning, care, cooking, and washing services.	<b>Recognise Redistribute Reduce Reward</b>	<b>Digital platform Skills-building B2B</b>
<a href="#">Hadas</a> is a for-profit digital platform that allows its customers to book hourly cleaning services according to their needs. It is also committed to providing its domestic workers with flexible jobs, job training and soft skills and offers workshops focused on increasing their personal wellbeing.	<b>Redistribute Reduce Reward</b>	<b>Digital platform Skills-building B2B</b>
<a href="#">Hogar</a> is a Colombian for-profit digital platform that provides cutting-edge technology for households and businesses to find reliable and quality domestic workers who have undergone a rigorous recruitment process.	<b>Redistribute Reduce Reward</b>	<b>Digital platform Skills-building B2B</b>
<a href="#">Homely</a> is a digital platform that connects clients with a trusted cleaning professional for their home or office more easily, quickly and securely.	<b>Recognise Redistribute Reduce Reward</b>	<b>Digital platform Skills-building B2B</b>
<a href="#">IPROFOTH</a> (Instituto de Promoción y Formación de Trabajadoras del Hogar) is a Peruvian non-profit organisation founded and led by female domestic workers. The organisation's mission is to protect and train domestic workers by offering them free/affordable services that promote their participation and active engagement in the labour market.	<b>Recognise Redistribute Reduce Reward</b>	<b>Skills-building</b>
<a href="#">Symplifica</a> is an innovative platform that seeks to provide social security and extra-legal benefits to domestic workers and nannies.	<b>Recognise Redistribute Reduce Reward</b>	
Infrastructure		
<a href="#">INNOVERDE</a> is a social enterprise that seeks to reduce the gap in access to drinking water among families suffering water scarcity. Their model assesses the lack of affordable solutions to reduce the time spent on domestic work.	<b>Reduce</b>	
<a href="#">Isla Urbana</a> strives to make rainwater harvesting an autonomous, sustainable and resilient alternative for the water supply of the most vulnerable.	<b>Reduce</b>	
<a href="#">Tierra Grata</a> is a for-profit social enterprise that develops and implements energy, water and sanitation solutions for rural villages in Colombia.	<b>Reduce</b>	

## 08. Helpful Resources

### [The Care Economy Knowledge Hub](#)

A global platform identifying, documenting and amplifying market-based solutions that recognise, reduce, redistribute and reward unpaid and paid care and domestic work – it includes more than 200 care economy SMEs and 60 business profiles.

### [CoreWoman 2023 – The Role of the Private Sector in the Transformation of the Care Economy in Latin America](#)

This report underscores the key role of the private sector as a co-responsible actor and highlights the actions that the private sector can take to transform the care economy, including harnessing internal policies, value and supply chains, marketing and communication strategies and investment funds.

### [Acumen and Business Fights Poverty, 2015. Social Enterprises and Global Corporations Collaborating for Growth Impact.](#)

This report investigates how partnerships between social enterprises and corporations can scale social impact and drive sustainable, inclusive business models. It also shares examples of successful collaborations, challenges and key success factors.

### [Acumen and Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship, 2016. Beyond Dialogue: Building Sustainable and Inclusive Business Models in Partnership with Social Entrepreneurs](#)

This report explores the potential of partnerships between social enterprises and corporations to address global challenges. It emphasises shared vision, trust and flexibility as key elements for successful collaborations. The report features case studies demonstrating how these partnerships can lead to sustainable and inclusive business models.

### [Business Fights Poverty, 2020. Strengthening Markets through Collaboration](#)

A guide to how business can help micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises to thrive and build high-performing value chains in developing markets through a system-level approach. Co-authored with Endeava.

### [IFC, 2023. Investing in Childcare: A Game Changer for Businesses and the Nigerian Economy](#)

This report investigates the challenges Nigerian parents face in accessing quality, affordable childcare, which hinders their job opportunities, particularly for women. It emphasises the gaps and opportunities related to providing family-friendly workplace policies and practices, including quality childcare.



[IFC, 2019. Tackling Childcare: A Guide for Employer-Supported Childcare](#)

This guide provides practical advice for companies on implementing quality, financially sustainable childcare. It highlights the benefits of such initiatives for children, women, businesses and socio-economic growth, and includes global case studies.

[Oxfam and Unilever, 2019. Business Briefing on Unpaid Care and Domestic Work: Why Unpaid Care by Women and Girls Matters to Business, and How Companies Can Address It](#)

Business leaders increasingly recognise the impact of women's unpaid care work on their firms. Some companies have implemented policies to support employees' care responsibilities, improving talent retention and productivity. Addressing this issue can also enhance supply chain resilience, business growth and customer loyalty. The report urges businesses to commit, act and advocate for reducing and redistributing unpaid care work.

[Transform Initiative: Impact Enterprises.](#)

Transform is a collaborative initiative by Unilever, the UK's FCDO, and EY, designed to support entrepreneurs – particularly impact enterprises in Africa and Asia – by providing funding and business support to test and scale solutions for environmental, health and economic inclusivity challenges.

[WOW, 2021. Unpaid and Unrecognised: How Business can Realise the Benefits of Tackling Women's Invisible Labour](#)

This guide by the Work and Opportunities for Women (WOW) programme addresses the issue of women's unremunerated and unrecognised labour in supply chains. It highlights the importance of this work in maintaining societies and economies, as well as the barriers it creates for women's equal workforce participation. The guide provides practical advice for companies to address these issues and promote gender equality.

[2X Collaborative, 2022. Investing in the Care Economy: A Primer for Gender-smart Investors](#)

In order to amplify the importance of the care economy, provide investors with an understanding, and spotlight actionable roadmaps, the GenderSmart & 2X Collaborative Care Economy Working Group commissioned two briefs. This first brief is a primer on what the care economy spans, what different business types are emerging, and the breadth of the sector to set up the foundation for investing in the care economy.

[2X Collaborative, 2022. Engaging with the Care Economy: A Guide for Investors, Employers and Corporate Actors](#)

This second brief on investing in the care economy provides practical guidance to investors and employers on how to engage. It provides research, learning and best-practice examples for exploring pathways to get involved.

[WOW and Primark 2020 The Double Day: Exploring unpaid work and care for female garment workers in Bangladesh](#)

This study looks in depth at the impact of unpaid care in the garment supply chain and found that on an average day, in addition to women's shift working in garment factories, they are spending almost as long, an average of 7 hours, on unpaid work and care for the household. It includes practical recommendations for business.

The following organisations can all help companies innovate with SMEs and entrepreneurs:

[Acumen](#)

[Ashoka](#)

[TechnoServe](#)

[Endeva](#)

[Aspen Institute](#)

## Endnotes

- [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/638cb83455f20147b91df430/t/6464a7ebed094334733895ae/1684318188219/GenderSmart-Introduction-CareEconomy\\_Nov22.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/638cb83455f20147b91df430/t/6464a7ebed094334733895ae/1684318188219/GenderSmart-Introduction-CareEconomy_Nov22.pdf)
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- <https://idrc-crdi.ca/en/initiative/transforming-care-economy-through-impact-investing>
- The Knowledge Hub has been developed by Kore Global, Core Woman, Intellectap, Busara and Sagana <https://www.the-care-economy-knowledge-hub.org/>
- [https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS\\_633135/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_633135/lang--en/index.htm)
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- <https://pressroom.ifc.org/all/pages/PressDetail.aspx?ID=27588>
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- <https://www.vodafone.com/news/inclusion/global-maternity-policy>
- <https://www.rainforest-alliance.org/insights/our-work-to-prevent-child-labor-guatemala-coffee-farms/>
- Example cited via Ariel India website: <https://www.ariel.in/en-in/about-ariel/share-the-load/share-the-load-for-more-equality>  
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- <https://causemarketing.com/case-study/pantene-strong-is-beautiful-dad-do-case-study/>
- <https://www.ikeasocialentrepreneurship.org/en/social-enterprises/homely>
- See, for example: 'Top Employers for Working Families Benchmark' and the 'Carer Friendly Commitment Mark'
- <https://immersives.pioneerspost.com/how-many-social-enterprises-worldwide/index.html>
- [https://acumen.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/1502-AcumenSummitReport\\_092115Finalv2\\_pgs.pdf](https://acumen.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/1502-AcumenSummitReport_092115Finalv2_pgs.pdf)

## About

Business Fights Poverty is a global business-led network that partners with companies to support the lives, livelihoods and access to learning of the most vulnerable people and communities. We have 17+ years' experience coordinating rapid collaborations that drive action, curating meaningful convenings to deepen relationships, and harnessing the collective learning of our 30,000+ community to unlock insights. At our centre is a group of leading global companies and a network of content partners from across the international development community.

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**If we ever want to see anything close to true gender equality, we need more workplace policies and public policies that prioritise caregivers – and employers have an important role to play in both.**

—Melinda Gates French,  
LinkedIn, March 2023