

# COMPREHENSIVENESS IN CARE AND THE ENVIRONMENT REGARDING LABOUR RIGHTS IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

► POLICY BRIEF ►



**GRRIPP**  
Gender Responsive  
Resilience & Intersectionality In  
Policy & Practice



UK Research  
and Innovation



CENTRE FOR GENDER  
AND DISASTER



**PUCP**

## *Executive summary*

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At present, women carers in the Dominican Republic struggle due to precarious income, have no social protection and are forced to deal with inadequate regulations. In addition, the health and economic crisis unleashed by the pandemic increased the work overload for carers. Taking into account that care work has always been essential to sustain people's lives, health and welfare, it demands fundamental attention, due to its significant social and economic contribution.

It is essential to include public policies for care in the workplace in the Dominican Republic in order to fight poverty and inequality much more effectively, by protecting the rights of the people, those who care after others as well those requiring care.

This work is part of what sustains life in society. From an environmental and ergonomic standpoint, the importance of caring after carers stands out. It means making sure they have good working, living and health conditions, as well as protecting the environment, considering the effect environmental

conditions have on this group. It is necessary to shine a light on the importance of caring after both people and the environment, in a binding manner.

Taking into account the social-environmental crisis, the lack of a strategy for managing waste from different origins affecting people's health and life, we at the National Federation of Women Workers (FENAMUTRA) take on the responsibility to centre the discussion regarding care on daily experience. We consider an eco-feminist approach to care a necessity, in order to give priority to the protection of life and the environment in any actions taken.

This makes it essential to promote training for carers on physical and environmental conditions in their workplace, as well as the general conditions that must prevail in any healthy workplace. It is also fundamental to produce instructional materials on care, the environment and solid waste management aimed at carers, in order to further environmental awareness.

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<sup>1</sup>Prepared by the National Federation of Women Workers (Federación Nacional de Mujeres Trabajadoras – FENAMUTRA) in collaboration with Alicia Méndez Medina as part of the GRRIPP project (Gender Responsive Resilience and Intersectionality in Policy and Practice), led by University College London and coordinated in Latin America and the Caribbean by Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú.

## Los cuidados remunerados en República Dominicana

According to research by ECLAC, in the Dominican Republic, by 2021, 92.8% of people in domestic and care work were women (241 881), and the remaining 7.2% were men (18 809). More than 80% of women were employed in cleaning and domestic help, while men were employed mainly as chauffeurs (45.5%) or security guards (29%).



Monetary poverty, on the other hand, affected 19.2% of people in the sector (49 941), including 2430 people (0.9%) experiencing extreme poverty. Approximately 253 286 people (97.2 %) in domestic work were informally employed, especially women (98.4%). Among people in domestic work, 71.2% (approximately 185 506 people) had health insurance, external to their jobs; mainly, through the Subsidised Public System (Régimen Público Subsidiado).

The average monthly wage for people in paid domestic work was around RD\$ 7114.87. For women, this amount was RD\$ 6830.2, while for men, it was RD\$ 10763.32.

The approach to care that is just being outlined at present in the Dominican Republic fails to take into account gender, race, class and territory intersections – that is, the workers' context –, as well as environmental matters, underscoring instead the workplaces where the workers carry out their daily activities.

Domestic work is carried out mainly by women. In Latin America, domestic workers comprise a large part of people in paid work. “Around 18 million people in paid domestic work are estimated, of which 93% are women”.

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In the Dominican Republic, according to official data by the National Statistics Department (Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas – ONE), **family and care responsibilities were women’s main reason for not being in the workforce (this corresponds to 40%, in contrast with 2% among men).**

According to a study by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in the Dominican Republic, “Los procesos de vivir, trabajar, enfermar y morir de las trabajadoras del hogar”, (Life, work, illness and death processes for domestic workers), 67% of domestic workers come from the country’s rural areas, and live there, even if they commute to the cities. It also points out that three out of every ten women have an incomplete primary education, and 10% of women cannot read or write. Regarding care work, the study points out that, because of the double shift, when they get home domestic workers also have to care

after their own children and elderly relatives, as well as doing housework. Including care policies in this country’s workplace is clearly a priority, in order to make progress towards women’s financial autonomy and improve their standards of living.

Care providers in the health system are regularly exposed to health risks due to the manipulation of hazardous materials. The COVID-19 pandemic compounded this situation. As for domestic workers, the FENAMUTRA-FITH 2020 survey on 206 participants showed that due to the pandemic 60% of them had been fired or suspended, 15% had to stay in their employer’s home, 5% reported having suffered violence, 56% of those who retained their job did not receive PPE and 70% received no support from the government.

FENAMUTRA is a union and community organisation protecting the rights of its affiliates: domestic





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workers, people in clerical work in the health sector, early childhood carers and women in rural areas, among others. FENAMUTRA considers all life, and not only people's lives, to be deserving of care.

We are all dependent on the environment, since we rely on Mother Earth, and are interdependent, since we rely on others. We are interdependent because we all require care sometime in our lives. Therefore, if women carers are not taken care of, what we have is a “care crisis”, and life sustainability is at risk.

It is therefore essential to create collective instruments for existence and for workplaces free from the hazards to which workers are daily exposed, in addition to a lack of health security and protection regulations for women in the workplace.



## Eco-feminism: caring after people and the environment

The planet is deep in what many authors have called a civilisation crisis, due to exploitation, an indiscriminate use of resources and the unequal relationships that have been established throughout the centuries.

“

*We Black women have always paid attention to care work, from the standpoint of our ancestral communities. Care goes beyond paid work; it's related to the spiritual sphere, to daily life. In our communities, care is acknowledged as a comprehensive part of our lives.*

”

says Bienvenida Mendoza Benítez, an anti-racist feminist who founded Resistencia, a cultural group, in the Carril de Haina community, Dominican Republic. According to Colombian anthropologist Arturo Escobar, we are going through “a planetary, multi-faceted crisis questioning our way of living and our society.”

FENAMUTRA understands, based on the multiple experiences it harbours, that in order for a care policy to be implemented, a wider outlook is necessary. This will allow a society to go beyond an assistance approach

and money transfers, towards an understanding of care issues as integrated to every aspect of life, to our natural environment, to work, to food production.

Hence the importance of approaching care from an eco-feminist perspective. It is essential to understand the close relationship between the social and ecological crises, and that our environments have an impact on life and on performance in every sphere of existence.

This is why FENAMUTRA has promoted the slogan “Don't assault me!” (“¡No me agredas!”), an initiative that promotes recycling and an effective and timely waste management, in addition to raising awareness regarding care and non-violence towards Mother Earth.

Present approaches to care in the Dominican Republic tend to contemplate the social issues we are experiencing out of context, in an individual, anthropocentric way. This leads to a limited perspective and hinders coordinated, situated actions that may contribute to a profound and real transformation of social relationships.

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**Care policy must take into account all aspects of life in a society, the work environment and the territories we inhabit.**

FENAMUTRA, as an institution organising workers in order to protect their labour rights, understands care to reside in decent wages, good working conditions and actions that alleviate the environmental and social crisis we are facing. Through the organisation's work it has become apparent that it is essential to implement a care policy that addresses every aspect of the work sphere, including being treated decently and a workplace that ensures the workers' wellbeing.

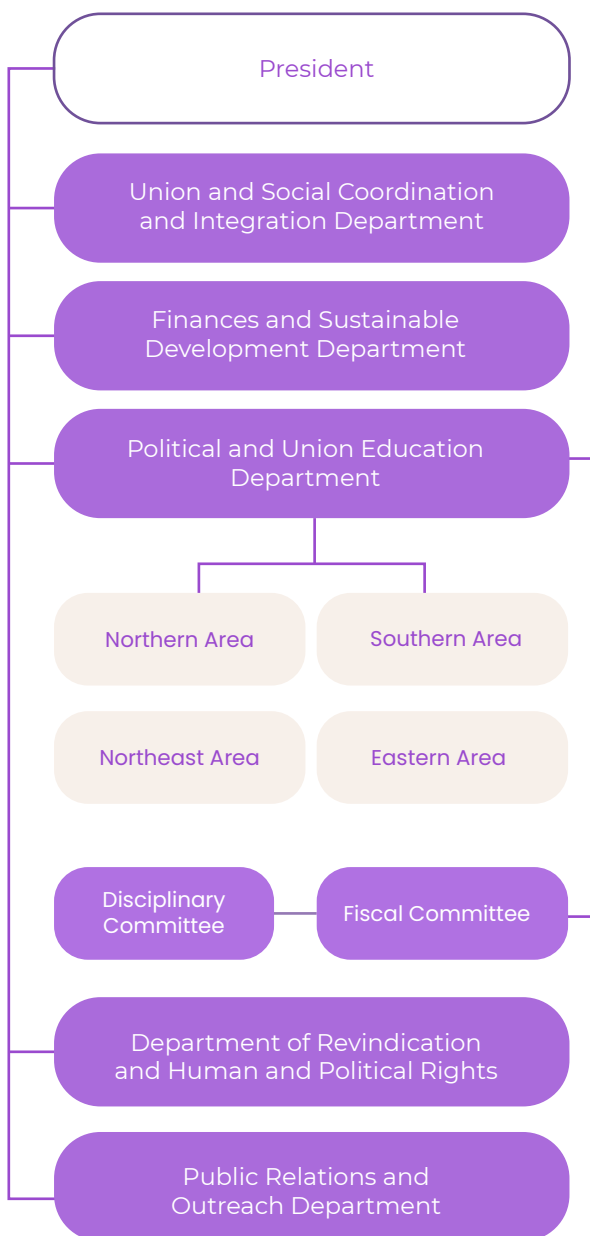
It is necessary to bring awareness to the link between protecting workers' rights and preserving the environment, since the workers' physical and emotional health depends on the upkeep of the spaces they work in, and of the public or private places they frequent.



*D.N. Mayor supporting the proclamation*

## FENAMUTRA: Defending workers' rights

FENAMUTRA was founded on 2009, as a branch of the National Confederation of Dominican Workers (Confederación Nacional de Trabajadores Dominicanos – CNTD), one of three union centres in the Dominican Republic. At present, the federation has more than 10 000 members, under the following structure:



The institution organises and represents the different care areas: health, domestic work, early childhood care and elderly care.

### Dominican Republic Care Board

FENAMUTRA has worked in synergy with national and international union federations and centres, such as the International Federation of Domestic Workers (Federación Internacional de Trabajadoras del Hogar – FITH), the Latin American Confederation of State Workers (Confederación Latinoamericana de Trabajadores Estatales – CLATE) and the International Union of Food Workers (Unión Internacional de Trabajadores de la Alimentación – UITA), the Confederation of Domestic Workers of Latin America and the Caribbean (Confederación Latinoamericana y del Caribe de Trabajadoras del Hogar – CONLACTRAHO) and UNI Care, the UNI Global Union area in charge of care work.

The federation has also often participated in International Labour Organisation (ILO) conferences, and has been represented in the Dominican Republic National Social Security Council (Consejo Nacional de



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Seguridad Social de República Dominicana), in the Tripartite Board for Domestic Work and in the national pilot project Care Board. It has also taken part in important forums and national conferences, such as, among others, ECLAC's XV Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Feminist Forum on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment and Participation in Civil Society. Its lengthy experience has allowed the organisation to achieve an expertise that is a result of its constant work. This has enabled it to attain achievements that make FENAMUTRA a benchmark for unions and for ensuring rights. Among them is decree 782-22 (December 31, 2022), which dedicates the entirety of its article 5 to SINATRASALUD – FENAMUTRA members, and grants pensions to health workers.

### **CONAPE AND FENAMUTRA collaboration agreement**

It has also participated in agreements with State institutions working on care. This has been the case recently with the National Council for Senior Citizens (Consejo Nacional de la Persona Envejeciente – CONAPE), which conferred initiatives to FENAMUTRA in order to improve quality of life for their staff, as well as train them in technical abilities for comprehensive care work, benefiting some 200 people in the first stage.

Originally, the federation provided training exclusively to domestic workers, but at present it has expanded the centre's training scope. It now has the technical and legal backing of the Instituto Nacional de Formación Técnico Profesional (INFOTEP) to provide childcare, elderly care and first aid training.

Likewise, FENAMUTRA has the support of the Dominican Institute for the Prevention and Protection of Work Hazards (Instituto Dominicano



*República Dominicana care table*

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CONAPE and FENAMUTRA collaboration agreement.

de Prevención y Protección de Riesgos Laborales – IDOPPRIL), for the implementation of a Special Programme for the Prevention of Work Hazards in the Home for domestic workers and carers, to receive training through talks and workshops on possible hazards in their workplace and work hazard insurance, among other issues.

### Don't assault me! A cry for Mother Nature

More than a demand, this document is a roadmap for the defence of our rights as a society and as a planet, of the mother who gives us life and also of nature, the mother that nourishes us in her arms, by caring after its rivers, oceans, mountains and all plant and animal forms of life.

It is time to rethink the cultural and socio-economic relationships

Read the complete demand and join here:



between ourselves and with Mother Nature. It is time to change the model binding men, women and Mother Nature around a

system of property values, as objects in a patriarchal system.

## Results and lessons learned



Throughout the years, FENAMUTRA has undertaken initiatives related to an environmental care approach, always taking into account the specific context of the groups it works with. An example is the “Solid waste management with a domestic work approach (ecological homes)” project, which took place in 2021–2022, as part of the Gender Response Resilience and Intersectionality in Policy and Practice (GRRIPP) global initiative.

As part of this project, female domestic workers received training in solid waste treatment. FENAMUTRA works towards respect and care for the environment, based on its work on issues that shine a light on the gender, race and class inequalities that configure care work.

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Women members of the institution have related their experiences throughout the years, proving that when talking about disasters, work issues are not taken into account, and neither are the hazards to which workers are exposed in the workplace. An example is chemicals manipulation, without information



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being provided on their use, as well as psychological risks and the harassment to which workers are subjected in the workplace. As part of FENAMUTRA's mission of influencing public policies to improve the situation of domestic workers, carers and health staff, we place this material in your hands, so it may contribute to expand actions in the care sphere.



As part of the impact of the “Ecological Homes” project we may mention the competencies acquired among female domestic workers regarding solid waste management, recycling, handicrafts, eco-feminism and entrepreneurship. Training and awareness among female domestic workers were furthered by producing objects in the workshops and selling them. Gender violence and environmental policy awareness was raised among public institution actors. A signature collection campaign, “Don’t assault me! A cry for Mother Nature” (“¡No me agredas! Un grito a favor de la

madre naturaleza”), was relaunched to demand action to fight gender violence against women. Lastly, four sessions with local authorities and journalists were carried out.

The project also underscored the importance of ecological homes in the preservation of the environment, and the role they play in each tiny contribution to its protection. **We also learned that ensuring women workers are cared after is not possible without respecting their rights, and without preserving Mother Earth.**



# Recommendations: Bolstering care networks

1

Promoting the “Don’t assault me!” demand and signing it, carrying out each item in the different institutions comprising the Care Board.

Promoting the effective implementation of ILO agreements 156, 183, 189 and 190 and raising awareness of them.

2

3

Producing guides or toolkits on work hazards in the home, with an eye on environmental disasters.

Creating educational processes within the Care Board framework: workshops and training on an eco-feminist approach to care for domestic workers and carers.

4

5

Creating territorial care networks: neighbourhoods, rural communities, networks that carry out their actions based on community experience.

Producing educational primers on care, the environment and solid waste management addressed at carers to further environmental awareness and expand knowledge on risk prevention in the workplace.

6



## Recommendations: Bolstering care networks

### ▶ A) In the health sector

- Carrying out training on chemicals management in hospitals.
- Training health staff on hospital waste management and raising awareness on their destination.
- Creating monitoring commissions for hospital waste management, in order to verify their destination.
- Establishing a training programme from the Care Board, to train hospital staff on recycling.

### B) For female domestic workers ◀

- Creating mechanisms to monitor domestic workers' shifts.
- Establishing a training programme, based on the Care Board, on recycling and waste management for female domestic workers.
- Creating a programme to prevent and protect from work hazards in the home.
- Creating protocols to advise female domestic workers on workers' rights.
- Carrying out social media and mass media outreach campaigns to raise awareness of workers' rights.
- Documentation campaigns for undocumented female domestic workers.
- Childcare programmes for the children of female domestic workers.

## Recommendations: Bolstering care networks

### ▶ C) For senior citizens

- Creating community daycare centres for the elderly, staffed with geriatric specialists and offering recreation spaces, as well as places to eat and socialise with other senior citizens.
- Creating educational programmes for senior citizens: drama and movement workshops, as well as socio-cultural programmes. Likewise, organising exercise, breathing and integrated care programmes for them.
- Carrying out health campaigns for senior citizens.
- Establishing protocols to monitor the living conditions and health of senior citizens and their families.
- Ensuring carers working at “Caring Homes” (“Hogares de Cariño”) are under formal contracts.

### D) For children

- Monitoring paediatric units in hospitals and ensuring they are operating properly.
- Carrying out outreach campaigns aimed at mothers to raise awareness of pregnancy care.
- Monitoring villages and State localities that protect children and adolescents.
- Establishing collaboration agreements with civil society institutions and multi-lateral organisations working with children in order to improve capacities, based on the Care Board.



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