

**CSW70 2026**

**Oral Statement**

**Integrating a Family Perspective to Accelerate Gender Equality**

Mr. Chair, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

Thirty years after the Beijing Declaration, we gather once again to ask a question that remains urgent: Why does gender inequality persist, even when our legal frameworks and political commitments are clearer than ever? At IFFD, present in 68 countries, we believe part of the answer lies not only in markets, institutions, or laws—but in the **organization of care**, and in the spaces where gender roles are first learned, negotiated, and reproduced. That space is not abstract. It is everyday life. It is the household. It is the family.

Let us be very clear from the outset: When we speak about families, we are not speaking about idealized models, nor about restricting women's autonomy. We are speaking about real women's lives, real constraints, and real inequalities—many of which are produced or intensified by how care is organized, valued, and distributed.

Across all regions, women continue to carry a disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work. Globally, women perform more than three times as much unpaid care as men—work that sustains economies, enables labor markets, and holds societies together, yet remains largely invisible in policy and economic planning.

This is not a marginal issue. It is a structural barrier to gender equality. Unpaid care work limits women's access to paid employment, decent work conditions, leadership, political participation, and economic independence. It contributes directly to the feminization of poverty, particularly among single mothers, migrant women, informal workers, and women in low-income households.

Recognizing this reality, SDG Target 5.4 calls on all of us to recognize, reduce, and redistribute unpaid care work. We strongly support this framework. But recognition cannot stop at measurement. Reduction cannot rely solely on individual coping strategies. And redistribution cannot be achieved without transforming social norms and policy design.

This is where a **family perspective**, understood correctly, becomes essential, because care is not performed in isolation. It is negotiated within households, shaped by labor markets, public services, and cultural expectations—and often constrained by a lack of real choice.

For too many women, “choice” means choosing between economic security and caregiving responsibilities. Between professional aspirations and the well-being of their children, parents, or relatives with disabilities. That is not empowerment. That is a constrained decision shaped by inequality.

A feminist approach to care must therefore ask not only who provides care, but also under what conditions, with what support, and at what cost.

**IFFD proposes a balanced approach to care, one that addresses both sides of the equation: those who provide care, and those who receive it.** Care providers—still overwhelmingly women—need policies that expand their real options. This includes affordable and high-quality childcare, gender-equitable parental leave, flexible and secure work arrangements, and social protection systems that recognize caregiving as a social contribution, not a private burden.

Crucially, it also requires the active involvement of men. Redistribution of care will not happen without transforming norms around masculinity, fatherhood, and responsibility. Promoting fathers’ engagement in caregiving is not a symbolic gesture—it is a necessary condition for gender equality.

At the same time, we must center the rights and dignity of care receivers. Children have the right to nurturing environments that support their full development. Older persons have the right to age with dignity, autonomy, and social inclusion. Persons with disabilities have the right to tailored support that enables independent and meaningful participation in society.

International human rights instruments—from the Convention on the Rights of the Child to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities—recognize the **role of families as a first layer of care and protection**. But recognizing this role does not mean shifting responsibility onto households without support.

On the contrary. It means **strengthening public systems** so that families—diverse in form and context—are supported rather than overburdened. A family-centered approach, as we understand it, is not about reinforcing traditional roles. It is about redistributing responsibility between households, states, markets, and communities. It is about ensuring that care is high-quality, accessible, and responsive to the needs of those who receive it, without trapping women in unpaid and undervalued labor.

It is also about data. What we do not measure, we do not change. Time-use surveys and standardized frameworks such as ICATUS are essential tools to make unpaid care visible and comparable. But we must also invest in innovation, using digital tools and new methodologies to improve data collection while reducing the burden on households, particularly on women. Evidence-based policymaking requires evidence that reflects lived realities.

If we are serious about accelerating gender equality?, we must stop treating care as a private issue and start treating it as a core pillar of social and economic policy.

Investing in care is not a cost: it is a multiplier. It creates jobs, reduces inequality, supports children's development, and enables women's full participation in public life.

IFFD therefore calls on Member States and civil society to:

- a. Recognize unpaid care work as a central economic and social contribution.
- b. Implement gender-equitable, fully paid parental leave for both parents.
- c. Ensure universal access to affordable, high-quality childcare and care services.
- d. Support older persons and persons with disabilities through community-based services that respect dignity and autonomy.
- e. Promote men's equal responsibility for care through policy, education, and cultural change.
- f. Engage the private sector in adopting family-friendly and care-sensitive workplace practices.

Gender equality will not be achieved only through laws passed in parliaments or resolutions adopted in this room. It will be achieved by what happens every day in homes, workplaces, and care systems. If we want transformative change, we must transform how care is valued, shared, and supported. Investing in care is investing in women's rights. Investing in families is investing in equality, dignity, and sustainable development.