



Guidelines for the Application of Co-Responsibility Measures for Caregiving in Companies



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The **Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM)** is the main forum generating region-wide policies for the promotion of women's rights and gender equality. Founded in 1928, in acknowledgment of the significance of females' social inclusion to strengthen democracy along with human development in the Americas, the CIM was the debut intergovernmental body put in place to foster women's human rights.

Guidelines for the Application of Co-responsibility Measures for Caregiving in Companies

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Prologue

Alejandra Mora Mora

Executive Secretary

Inter-American Women's Commission

Organisation of the American States (CIM/OEA)

The Inter-American Commission Women of the Organization of American States (CIM/OAS) acts as the main forum for generating region-wide policies for the promotion of women's rights and gender equality. Founded in 1928, in acknowledgment of the significance of females' social inclusion to strengthen democracy along with human development in the Americas, the CIM was the first intergovernmental body put in place to foster women's human rights.

In this role as the main hemispheric forum for women's rights and gender equality, the CIM links commitments made at the international level with effective public policy at the national level. To embark upon this work, the CIM has prioritized the establishment and in-depth exploration of alliances to expand the scope of its endeavors along with its sustainability over time. In this regard, significant strides have been taken to increase coordination with a wide array of strategic partners: Delegates and senior gender authorities, other government authorities in the region and relevant political actors, public entities at the national level, international organizations, civil society, the private sector through meetings and public-private partnerships, academia, and non-gender-sensitive sectors. Along this pathway, in the recently held CIM Assembly of Delegates in Panama in 2022, the Ministers express their commitment to building alliances and articulating gender equality for the good of humanity, considering its importance for the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

In its Strategic Plan 2022-2026, the CIM prioritizes the women's economic rights agenda and recognizes that one of the greatest structural barriers identified for the full and effective participation of women, under equal conditions, in the labor market and in productive life is the traditional gender roles assigned to women in terms of caring for people dependents, and unpaid domestic work, and therefore sets forth a strategic line of work on women's economic rights.

In this regard, the CIM works to develop instruments and tools that support different stakeholders to develop policies and legislative frameworks that ensure women's economic rights are guaranteed and protected. In 2022, in liaison with EUROsociAL, the CIM presented the Inter-American Model Law on Care (LMIC)¹, which brings together key elements of international instruments and is grounded on existing standards in matters of rights, non-discrimination and equality between men and women. The purpose of the LMIC is to recognize, redistribute, regulate, promote, and generate new forms of care and unpaid domestic work, as well

1 <https://www.oas.org/es/cim/docs/LeyModeloCuidados-EN.pdf>.

as to make visible and recognize the historical contribution of women in this area. Through this Model Law, we offer a concrete tool to the States to strengthen economic autonomy and enhance the contribution and human talent of women in the productive world and towards sustainable economic growth.

One of the key elements that is grounded on one of the LMIC's pillars is the redistribution of caregiving and joint responsibility for caregivers, duly defined in its article 3 as being *"shared responsibility of every actor in society to create the conditions so everyone may freely join adequate caregiving networks that sustain life and allow them to reach their full spiritual and material potential. Social co-responsibility for caregiving requires the State, local governments, the private sector, the community, the men and women who comprise households and the multiple generations to provide and contribute equally and mutually to caregiving to protect families and people, foster their development, and promote people's autonomy, particularly that of women."*

As a follow-up to the foregoing, these *Guidelines for the Application of Co-responsibility Measures for Caregiving in Companies*, acknowledging the significant role of the private sector as a jointly responsible stakeholder in society in tackling caregiving issues and promoting equal involvement of women in the workplace. This document seeks to provide the private sector with guidelines on corporate joint responsibility for caregiving and the implementation of concrete measures for the equitable distribution of care work among the different social sectors.

Caregiving requires a cultural transformation that recognizes the value of care, women's historical contribution to sustaining life and the economy, and its impact on women's daily lives. On this path of cultural transformation, a social structure is required in which the social organization of care is co-responsible, and its equitable distribution is an advance in terms of gender equality, through a revolution of practices, customs, and paradigms on care, to achieve substantive equality and women's autonomy in all spheres.

Through these guidelines, we recognize the work already being done by the private sector as a co-responsible actor in care, highlighting the importance of deepening what is being done and continuing with this cultural transformation to move towards a society in which substantive equality between men and women is a reality.

Message from EUROsociAL Bridge

Ana Pérez Camporeale

Coordinator of the Gender Equality Policies Division

EUROsociAL Bridge Programme

The European Union programme, EUROsociAL has contributed over more than 15 years towards social cohesion in Latin America, through the improvement of public policies aimed at reducing structural inequalities.

Over recent years, with the creation of a specific division to enact Gender Equality Policies, the programme has given its backing to the bolstering of public policies geared towards improving the physical, political, and economic freedom of women mainly through joint work with the National Machineries for the Advancement of Women in place in the region and through liaison with the Inter-American Women's Commission, CIM-OEA.

Following the relaunch of EU-LAC relations, expressed through the EU-CELAC Summit held in Brussels in 2023, in which the Global Gateway Investment Agenda (GGIA)² was unveiled, EUROsociAL Bridge (2023-2024) committed to boost public-private investments featuring a 360° approach grounded on values that contribute to high quality investments while mirroring the founding principles of the EU to hasten sustainable and inclusive development.

Through the GGIA investments and development cooperation guided through the Team Europe Initiative³, the EU seeks to contribute to the wholesale and sustainable development of partner countries, strengthening global order grounded on multilateralism and which has as its core bolstering socio-environmental sustainability, democratic societies, upholding the Rule of Law and human rights, protection of workers' rights and gender equality.

Along these same lines, these Guidelines, drafted by EUROsociAL Bridge, have intended to establish bonds between the private sector as these comprise a fundamental axis to encourage growth, employment, social cohesion, human development, alongside fostering an entrepreneurial and regulatory backdrop adhering to human rights matters, non-discrimination and gender equality.

The tasks embarked upon between the public and private sector are essential for the application of the measures they provide to the vastly needed shared responsibility in caregiving from all sectors within society and therefore as a means of throwing off the classic shackles of transferring “naturally” and traditionally all caregiving responsibilities both inside and outside the household to women.

2 Initiatives in Latin America and the Caribbean - European Commission (europa.eu)

3 TEI: joins the EU institutions, Member States and its cooperation agencies, financial development institutions.

The private sector is, likewise, a key stakeholder for the equality of opportunities between men and women, for the continuance and advancement of women's professional careers which are commonly brought to a halt as a result of caregiving duties, entailing thus a loss of human talent for them, the State and the actual firms.

Against this backdrop and considering that presently firms encounter difficulties to recruit or retain human talent, and that in a parallel sense, both male and female workers increasingly place greater value on flexibility and personal growth when making decisions regarding their employment, ground-breaking measures from the private sector may act as dealbreakers for this recruitment or retention.

While drafting these guidelines, the aid of the private sector and the participation of the Mechanisms for Women's Progress (hereinafter, MAM), have allowed us to bring to the fore that there are cutting-edge initiatives in place from within companies that go beyond the existing national legislation in certain countries and that these measures are aligned with reform priorities for public policymaking that MAM has been advocating to progress in corporate joint responsibility in caregiving matters.

Therefore, through this work, the close-knit relationship and interaction between public policies and private sector firms is restated, along with the need to strengthen alliance between both sectors to progress in terms of women's rights.

All sectors, whether public or private, must intensify joint endeavours to encourage sustainable economic growth, thereby backing human development, social transformation and a sturdy, sustainable economy that promotes females' equality and social inclusion.

Our hope is that these guidelines will offer a source of inspiration and act as a valuable resource for all those firms that wish to engage in matters of gender equality and joint responsibility.

Likewise, these guidelines provide an incidence instrument to bring to the fore the importance of having on hand the public policies necessary to progress towards social joint responsibility in matters of caregiving.

We offer our thanks to the experts at EUROsocial Bridge, Aída Cerda Cristerna and Guadalupe García Gutiérrez along with the representatives of the companies consulted, the MAM, civil and academic society associations, which have provided their knowledge and experience to draft these guidelines.

Acknowledgements

These guidelines could not have been drafted without the support of the private, public and social sectors, specifically those who attended the consultation sessions held within the project's framework, which provided a vastly essential and valuable source of information. Therefore, we are extremely grateful for their collaboration and contributions, alongside those companies which shared some the corporate co- responsibility measures that they are implementing.

Dialogue with national machineries for the advancement of women

Chile

Ministry of Women and
Gender Equality (MMEG)

Costa Rica

National Women's Institute (INAMU)

Ecuador

Ministry of Women and
Human Rights (MMDH)

El Salvador

El Salvador Institute for Women's
Development (ISDEMU)

Dialogue with civil society organizations

Argentina

ELA

Chile

Fundación Kuidadoras Cam

Mexico

Oxfam
Mexican Care Network
Yo Cuido México

Peru

CARE
Yo Cuido Perú

**Dialogue with the private sector and
factsheets with co-responsibility measures**

Argentina

ArcelorMittal Acindar

Chile

ESSBIO

Laboratorios Bagó

Xinerlink

Costa Rica

Grupo Mutual

Edwards Lifesciences

Finca La Hilda

Mexico

ICA Fluor

El Salvador

AirSupport Group

Universidad Tecnológica de El Salvador (UTEC)

Regarding these Guidelines

These *Guidelines for the Application of Co-responsibility Measures for Caregiving in Companies* is the product of the cooperative work between the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM/OAS) and the UE backed program EUROsociAL, whose driving aim is to boost economic self-reliance of women and contribute to the closing of inequality gaps in this sphere, through the reinforcement of public policies and action plans that encourage a change towards a more caring society which also recognizes, reduces and redistributes caregiving tasks.

Grounded on this collaboration, the CIM/OAS presented the Inter-American Model Law on Care, which includes redistribution of care and co-responsibility as an essential element in its pillars. Social co-responsibility for care is understood as the shared responsibility and equitable distribution of care work among state institutions, local governments, the private sector, communities, families and, within these, between men and women. It implies the participation of these actors from their competence and assuming their responsibility, the redistribution of care work in households and the incorporation of the gender and care perspectives in actions that promote co-responsibility, since care -whether it is caring, receiving care or self-care- is a right for all people.

Within this framework, we recognize the urgent challenge of transforming the world of work so that both women and men can harmonize their work, family and personal lives, and the essential role of the private sector in providing the conditions that contribute to achieving this. The social co-responsibility agenda undoubtedly requires the coordination of efforts and the participation of all the agents involved.

These guidelines' purpose is to make available to the private sector a tool to facilitate the implementation of co-responsibility measures to provide work-life balance, with concrete recommendations to help create the necessary conditions to develop an organizational culture where social co-responsibility actions are more likely to work in the long term. The guide also provides examples of measures being implemented in companies in the region (multi-national, national and local).

Although this guide is based on various analyses and research that have documented how the absence of social co-responsibility impacts women and men, companies, the economy of countries and society as a whole, and how its existence benefits them, in order to draft these guidelines, we identified companies from public-private alliances through consultations with the National Machineries for the Advancement of Women; questionnaires were then sent to companies to identify practical measures that contribute to the social co-responsibility of care; and finally, discussion groups were held with technical teams from the NMAW (1), groups with companies (2) and another group with civil society organizations recognized in

the field of co-responsibility of care. All these inputs provided by key actors from the public and private sectors, academia, and social organizations, who contributed their knowledge, experiences, reflections and practices in social co-responsibility, were considered for the structure of this guide.

While this publication is aimed at all those companies that take on the corresponding role in the entrepreneurial sector in terms of co-responsibility and hold a vested interest in putting it into practice, plus on a general level to all who wish to use it, the guide identifies that, for those who have the purpose or mission of promoting the harmonization of work, family and personal life with social co-responsibility within organizations, this may not be an easy task. In this sense, the guide will serve as a support tool, mainly for personnel in the areas of human talent management, diversity and inclusion, gender equality units, corporate culture, sustainability, or social responsibility (without this meaning that it is the exclusive task of these areas); and it will also serve as a basis for arguments and evidence for decision makers. Likewise, this guide is an advocacy tool to make visible the importance of having the necessary public policies to move towards social co-responsibility for care.

Those who delve deeper into the *Guidelines for the Application of Co-responsibility Measures for Caregiving in Companies* will find it broken down in the following manner:

- **Chapter 1:** The need to address the dynamics of the labor market from an integral vision, the negative effects that the lack of social co-responsibility has on the full exercise of women's rights and how it also impacts the well-being of men, and the fundamental role of companies as co-responsible agents.
- **Chapter 2:** The benefits of having a co-responsibility strategy in the company, ranging from business results, employee satisfaction and organizational reputation, to the economic growth of countries and the contribution to the global agenda for sustainable development.
- **Chapter 3:** The seven essential elements or facilitators that are recommended to transform the organizational culture of the company, so that it is favorable to co-responsibility among the actors and to the balance between work, family and personal life from its structure.
- **Chapter 4:** Aspects to consider so that co-responsibility measures truly contribute to balance and equality of opportunities and treatment; types of practices; and co-responsibility measures that are being implemented by companies in the region with great potential for articulation with public policies.

It is important to mention that the work in favor of co-responsibility is progressive. Although some organizations will find it easier to overcome the challenges and implement the practices, either because of their size, resources, or formal status, this does not mean that not all of them will benefit from promoting co-responsibility measures for care and the balance between work, family and personal life of those who make up the company.

In making this guide available to companies, we are confident that the transformation of the world of work is possible with the indispensable participation of the business sector. Therefore, it carries with it an invitation to analyze the proposals and put them into practice, to generate progressive changes in their respective areas of influence and achieve spaces where there are equal opportunities and equal treatment between women and men, where care work is redistributed and where the harmonization of work, family and personal life becomes a reality for everyone.

1. Co-responsibility: the great challenge to attain equality between women and men

Social or corporate co-responsibility in caregiving is one of the major challenges of our times.⁴ The traditional model of persons working full-time unable to find a balance between the workplace and their family and personal responsibilities has become unsustainable and far removed from the reality of women and men's lives. Over many years, the dynamics of the job market have been grounded on an unwavering division of productive and reproductive tasks, which hinders the exercise of human rights, and that has serious consequences and costs for individuals and companies.

It is impossible to tackle this complex challenge without the involvement of the private sector. In order for companies to achieve an organizational culture in which work-life balance, as one of the elements of co-responsibility for care, is a daily reality, it is necessary to understand what lies behind this challenge. People's demands for a better quality of life at work, social demands for equality between women and men, and global trends in sustainable development and diversity have powerful reasons at their root. A company that understands these arguments will be better prepared to take full advantage of the benefits of equality and inclusion, as well as to adjust to change and compete in the marketplace.

⁴ This is referred to thus by the International Labour Organisation and the United Nations Programme for Development (2009), given that they recognize work-life balance through social co-responsibility as being as fundamental dimension to promote equality and combat poverty from within the world of work.

Social co-responsibility in terms of caregiving under the Inter-American Model Law on Care (LMIC)

The LMIC defines social co-responsibility and family co-responsibility for caregiving in its Articles 25 and 26. Therein, it is stated that social joint responsibility in terms of caregiving requires that caregiving tasks be equally distributed between State institutions, municipalities, the private sector, communities, families, and men and women. Likewise, it regulates the principle of family co-responsibility by establishing that Spouses and partners must care for, under the same conditions and with shared effort, household responsibilities and maintenance, raising and educating children who are minors or have a disability, as well as any other dependents under their care in the shared home or in a different home. This is further reinforced in its Article 26 which states that men share equal responsibility with women for the quality and conditions of caregiving, except for physical and biological aspects linked to maternity.

Likewise, Article 32, sets forth one of the key elements for social co-responsibility which corresponds to the role of employers, who must have internal work-life balance measures that allow workers with family responsibilities to tend to their caregiving needs.

People are integral: personal life, family life and work are interdependent

The labor market has been seen as something separate from the family and individual spheres, but the women and men who work in a company of any size on a daily basis are integral individuals who require well-being in both spheres in order to perform satisfactorily in them. It is necessary to approach the life of the personnel that make up an organization from an integral perspective, recognizing that each sphere has an impact on the other, as well as on the time that people can dedicate to them. Those who are part of the company have a life outside the company and a limited number of hours to organize their responsibilities in the home and care work, self-care, family and social life, political participation, studies, sports and entertainment. A view that disconnects the different spheres causes people to face conflicts and tensions in balancing them.

It is necessary for organizations to reflect on the fact that the employees who work there have the possibility of covering their working day because there are other people - or they themselves at other times - who provide the care required by their homes. Until before the pandemic, domestic and care work had not been seen as an activity that formed part of the productive chains, even for companies it could have been invisible as an element with

economic value, since it was considered a strictly family matter, but the era of the shelter made it more visible than ever that without the unpaid work performed in the home, economic and productive life is not possible.⁵

Without social co-responsibility measures in terms of caregiving, women will be left behind

Although both men and women find it difficult to harmonize their working lives with their personal and family lives, the consequences are not the same. This is because gender roles and stereotypes are reproduced in the labor market, i.e., the organization of work and family life has historically been established on the basis of an unequal assignment: the role of providers and caretakers of paid work has traditionally been stipulated for men and the tasks of care and maintenance of the home have been given to women.

Women enter the job market facing disadvantages and discrimination from the outset. Sufficient evidence has been unearthed that displays a gender inequality gap in the workplace: reduced economic participation, occupational segregation and the wage gap are clear signs of roles and stereotypes, glass ceilings, sanctions for maternity and greater insertion in informal sector jobs in search of flexibility to meet family responsibilities.⁶ This backdrop limits the opportunities women are given to create their own income streams.

Added to this is the double workload, since their participation in economic activities has not been accompanied by a more balanced distribution of household and care work between women and men. Women in Latin America dedicate more than twice as many hours to unpaid domestic and care work as men: 38 and 16 hours per week, respectively.⁷

Social co-responsibility and the reconciliation of work, family and personal life in the labor market contribute to closing gender gaps, to building a fairer society where women can exercise their right to work without the limitations they face today, where they are no longer seen as the sole caregivers, where men assume their responsibility in domestic and care work, and where both can harmonize all areas of their lives.

5 Inter-American Commission of Commission (CIM/OAS) and the EUROsociAL+ (2020) Programme. COVID-19 in women's lives: Global Caregiving Emergency. Available at: <https://www.oas.org/es/cim/docs/CuidadosCOVID19-ES.pdf>

6 According to UN Women and the International Labour Organisation, occupational segregation can be horizontal and vertical. The first refers to the predominance of women in certain sectors of economic activity and in certain types of occupations, while in others a greater concentration of men is observed. Which has negative effects that impact the lives of women. For its part, the second is known by the metaphor "glass ceiling," which refers to the invisible barriers that prevent women from accessing hierarchical positions. Related to this, the term gender gap refers to any disparity between the condition or position of women and men in society. In this case, it is used as the difference between the income received by men and women.

7 Inter-American Development Bank (2019). The future of work in Latin America and the Caribbean. What will the workplace be like for women? Available at: <https://publications.iadb.org/es/el-futuro-del-trabajo-en-america-latina-y-el-caribe-como-sera-el-mercado-laboral-para-las-women>

The shortfall in co-responsibility measures also has a bearing on men

Measures to promote co-responsibility within companies undoubtedly contribute to eliminating one of the barriers that most affects women's participation in paid work, but they are not the only ones to benefit. Men will also gain considerably from an organizational culture that includes co-responsibility measures and promotes a balance between work, family, and personal life.

The role as workers that the labor market has demanded of men, the long working hours and the traditional role of economic providers have impacted their responsibility in domestic chores and caregiving activities. Many men have missed out on experiencing the richness of having a private life close to their children, participating in their upbringing, and accompanying them in their growth, and caring for their fathers and mothers. Today, however, some generations of young men have different expectations about the role and involvement they want to have within their families.⁸

Studies on the subject indicate that in the exercise of parenthood a meaningful relationship can be built with great benefits for parents, their daughters and sons. One of these is to strengthen the emotional and cognitive development, which contributes to a greater possibility of success in the school and professional environment and in general in life satisfaction.⁹ Other findings indicate that co-responsibility measures such as paternity leave, in addition to strengthening the bond between the father and his daughter or son, stimulate involvement in caregiving activities and greater participation in these tasks improves men's physical and mental health.¹⁰

For men to participate in a jointly responsible manner in unpaid domestic chores and caregiving activities, without running the risk of losing their jobs or thwarting their chances of furthering their careers, it is necessary to put in place a series of favorable conditions that contribute to equality of opportunities and treatment for all people, while modifying gender roles and stereotypes that pigeonhole both women and men while also hindering the exercise of their rights, including the right to care.

8 International Labour Organisation and United Nations Programme for Development (2009). Work and Family: Towards new forms of conciliation through social joint responsibility. Available at: <https://www.undp.org/es/mexico/publications/trabajo-y-familia-hacia-nuevas-formas-de-conciliaci%C3%B3n-con-joint-responsibility-social>

9 Jünemann, F. and Wiegand, C. (2021). Work from Home Manual: Legal Framework and good practices. ChileMujeres Foundation, International Labour Organisation, Under Secretary of Human Rights. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/santiago/publicaciones/WCMS_774768/lang--en/index.htm

10 Castro, M., Chávez, I., García, F., Masse, F., Ruiz, T. (2022). Paternity leave. Greater gender equality. IMCO. Available at: <https://imco.org.mx/licencias-de-paternidad-mayor-equidad-de-genero/>

Caregiving is the responsibility of all sectors in society

Joint responsibility is the strategy to attain a new pact in terms of social organization in terms of caregiving, as is duly established in the Inter-American Model Law on Care. A dimensional shift of this stature can only be achieved through alliances and working in liaison with all strategic stakeholders: the State, companies, civil society, and communities, alongside the involvement of men. In such a way that caregiving becomes no longer looked on as a duty that corresponds to the households, and within these, to women.

It is necessary for each of these actors to promote social co-responsibility in their respective spheres of competence. The involvement of the business sector is essential to transform the world of work into an egalitarian space, free of discrimination and violence, where everyone can harmonize the different spheres of their lives without having to give up one or the other.

Undoubtedly, when discussing the relations between domestic chores and caregiving in the workplace it is mandatory to mention the State's responsibility to create a legal framework, to offer services, tools, and infrastructure, and to promote an articulated linkage between the State and the companies. This recognition does not preclude addressing the responsibility of the private sector as an employer and - therefore - a co-responsible actor in reaching this new pact in the social organization of care. The redistribution of unpaid work necessarily implies that companies recognize and assume their role.

Articulated work between the State and the private sector is crucial for the implementation of effective co-responsibility for care measures that address the realities and needs of both women and men. This articulation should focus on the importance of having services and policies that facilitate access to care for male and female workers on equal terms, which promote joint financing of the measures and policies that are implemented, and that promote training and professional development for women and men.

The Inter-American Model Law on Care (LMIC)

The LMIC is a tool made available to the States through which care work is redefined, recognized, redistributed, and remunerated, and the universal human right to care is recognized and guaranteed.

In this sense, care is recognized as a public good and as a right that implies the redistribution of care tasks between the State, the market, society and men and women.

Therefore, throughout the LMIC, the necessary participation of companies is contemplated, particularly in a section dedicated to the responsibility of the private sector to protect the right to care in particular (articles 53 to 56). This Chapter addresses the importance of companies implementing co-responsibility job flexibility measures, promoting the existence and expansion of care infrastructure and services, generating alliances and ensuring social co-responsibility for care throughout the supply chain.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

The CEDAW, approved in 1979, states in its article 5 that Signatory States will take appropriate measures to:

- a) Modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women;
- b) that family education includes a proper understanding of maternity as a social function and the recognition of the common responsibility of men and women in the upbringing and development of their children, it being understood that the interest of the children is the primordial consideration in all cases.

Inter-American Program on the Promotion of Human Rights for Women and Gender Equality (IAP)

In 2000, the OAS Member States adopted the Inter-American Program on the Promotion of Women's Human Rights and Gender Equity and Equality (IAP), in order to i) systematically integrate the gender perspective in all organs and agencies and entities of the inter-American system and ii) encourage OAS Member States to formulate public policies, strategies and proposals aimed at promoting women's human rights and gender equality in all spheres of life.

The IAP laid the groundwork for sustained, permanent and strategic work by the entire Organization, led politically by the OAS General Secretariat (GS/OAS) and technically and strategically by the CIM. The IAP is committed to the gender perspective as a cross-cutting tool to address the identities of men and women, the power relations and asymmetries that are marked in this context, and that have a negative impact on access to opportunities and rights for women and girls.

Within the framework of the IAP, both the CIM and the States are moving forward with concrete actions and the formulation of public policies, strategies and proposals aimed at promoting women's human rights and gender equality in all spheres of public and private life, taking into account their diversity and life cycles.

2. Social co-responsibility as a business strategy

In addition to being a State obligation contained in international treaties and instruments on the subject, equality between women and men is a matter of human rights and an indispensable element of sustainable development. In addition, it is appropriate to make visible the positive effects it can have when it is integrated as a component of business strategies, and to recognize the role of the private sector as a co-responsible actor in the well-being of society and in achieving fairer workplaces without gender gaps.

This equality approach can be applied to all aspects of a company's operations. One way that offers clearly palpable and far-reaching benefits is the implementation of co-responsibility measures to facilitate the reconciliation of work, family and personal life. We all need to receive and provide care at different times of life, as well as time available for activities outside of work, so an organizational culture focused on co-responsibility benefits everyone in the company, while helping to reduce inequality and actively encouraging women to join the workforce.

The benefits of having a co-responsibility strategy in companies range from business results, reduced absenteeism and turnover, employee well-being, and organizational reputation, to the economic growth of countries, as explained below.

Improvements in profitability, productivity and innovation

Endeavors undertaken by companies in favor of equality between women and men have positive effects that contribute to businesses enjoying greater success. The International Labour Organization (OIT)¹¹ conducted a study in which more than 4,800 firms from Latin America and the Caribbean took part, whose findings showed that six out every ten organizations surveyed stated that gender equality initiatives help to improve their sales figures. Of these, 58% stated that their profits and productivity had been boosted, 51% enjoyed greater creativity, innovation and openness, 52% improved their company's standing, and 29% enhanced the skills to gauge consumers interest and demand levels.

An IBM study identified that companies that consider women's career advancement as a formal priority and see gender inclusion as a driver of financial performance reap business benefits. These companies report up to 61% higher revenue growth compared to the other organizations analyzed, 60% say their businesses are more innovative than the competition, and 73% say they are leaders in customer satisfaction within their industry, as diversity allows inclusive companies to be more responsive to external ideas and needs, including those of their customers.¹²

11 International Labour Organisation (2019). Women in corporate management. Arguments for change. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_700977/lang-es/index.htm

12 IBM Institute for Business Value (2021). Women, leadership and missed chances. Available at: <https://www.ibm.com/thought-leadership/institute-business-value/en-us/report/women-leadership-2021>

Talent attraction and employee wellbeing

Many organizations are discovering that it is becoming increasingly more difficult to identify talent and attract suitable talent, that best fits to their culture while displaying the skills sets and abilities necessary to perform a certain role. Today it is common for people to value flexibility and personal growth over stability, there is a generational shift in the elements that are considered when making employment decisions. Organizations cannot allow traditional practices to limit their access to the best talent, and one strategy is to create a culture of inclusion.¹³

Equal and inclusive environments result in a better work environment that attracts the best talent and prevents turnover and staff dissatisfaction:

- The abovementioned OIT study also unearthed advantages in this regard: amongst the companies surveyed who stated their revenue streams had improved, 54% reported that they had increased their ability to attract and hold on to talent.
- The abovementioned IBM study points out that 68% of the companies spearheading gender equality said they exceeded their competitors in terms of staff satisfaction, while 64% stated that their retention rates were higher.
- Regarding experiences with flexible working schedules (flextime) that have measured an effect on wellbeing and preventing employees leaving their posts, greater satisfaction levels have also been found. In a service sector company, staff who worked from home called in sick less and showed 50% less willingness to change companies compared to those working in offices.¹⁴
- Staff who have been granted flextime measures reported benefits including: reduction in travel costs, salary savings, time to devote to caregiving, studying and sports, enhanced mental health.¹⁵
- In line with the findings of the survey conducted by Deloitte¹⁶ in 45 countries, flexibility and work-life balance were a priority for the millennial generation¹⁷-the largest group in today's workforce-since before the pandemic, and they see lack of diversity and inclusion as a reason to leave the workplace.
- Although the legal framework is different, equality of opportunity and treatment along with various co-responsibility practices to facilitate work-life balance are present in labor legislation in Latin American countries. By complying with the law and having

13 Deloitte (2020). Creating Value and Impact through the Alternative Workforce. Implementing New Strategies to Acquire and Engage Alternative Talent. Available at: <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/us/Documents/human-capital/us-alt-work-force-talent-strategy-acquisition-and-engagement.pdf>

14 Workplace Gender Equality Agency (2019). Flexible working is good for business. Available at: <https://www.wgea.gov.au/flexible-work>

15 Ibidem.

16 Deloitte (2021). The Deloitte Global Millennial Survey: A decade in review. Available at: <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/global/Documents/2021-deloitte-global-millennial-survey-decade-review.pdf>

17 For the survey, those persons born between January 1983 and December 1994 were considered.

non-discriminatory internal practices, workplaces reduce the risk of being sued for non-compliance with labor legislation.¹⁸

Adaptation to market and global trends

There is a growing awareness that the private sector is a key player in the well-being of society. Companies are analyzed and questioned by their customers and public opinion, and social networks have become spaces that can have both positive and negative effects on the image of companies. All this affects people's purchasing decisions, which are of course based on intrinsic aspects of products and services, but also on the performance of companies in terms of the environment, human rights and labor rights. As a consequence, companies around the world and in all sectors are incorporating inclusion and gender equality as a component of their business models.

Understanding these trends and adapting to them can be a market differentiator, since an inclusive and diverse company that promotes the professional development of women will be a company that better understands its market:

- The millennial generation, whose habits are having a considerable impact on the economy because they are reaching their peak spending years, see businesses as having a responsibility to improve society and a greater potential to drive change.¹⁹
- A study conducted by SAP Ariba²⁰ featuring 10,000 respondents from five countries to ascertain the key factors in their purchasing decision-making processes, revealed that 65% of consumers would display greater loyalty to a brand that adhered to the Sustainable Development Goals (amongst which, gender equality is included), and that the positive social influence of a company is almost twice as important as other factors when making a purchase.
- The World Economic Forum, which every year drafts the Global Gender Gap Report,²¹ notes that as women become more economically independent, they also become more significant consumers of goods and services, making the majority of purchasing decisions. It also indicates that increasing gender equality and women's priorities have led to increased household savings and changes in spending patterns. In a rapidly changing world, organizations must adapt and innovate to remain relevant and competitive, thereby increasing the need for creativity fostered by diversity.

18 Intersecta (2023). Measuring Mexico's gender salary gap. Available at: <https://www.intersecta.org/posts/guia-metodologica-medir-brecha-salarial-genero-mexico>

19 Deloitte (2021). The Deloitte Global Millennial Survey: A decade in review. Available at: <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/global/Documents/2021-deloitte-global-millennial-survey-decade-review.pdf>

20 SAP Ariba (2018). How can businesses be a force for good? Available at: <https://www.ariba.com/about/procure-with-purpose/responsible-supply-chain-management>

21 Women Economic Forum (2014). Global Gender Gap Report 2014. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2014/>

Contribution to sustainable development strategies and environmental, social and governance (ESG) criteria

Numerous organizations have decided to show their commitment to sustainability by aligning actions with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, made up of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).²² Given that the social co-responsibility of care has an impact on equal opportunities and wellbeing at work, it features an intrinsic connection with SDG 5, which addresses gender equality and the empowerment of women, plus SDG 8, which seeks to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all people.

At the same time, in recent years the ESG approach²³ has increased its presence as a reference for corporate responsibility and sustainability actions, as well as for evaluating the effects of the private sector on the environment, society and governance. Within this approach, social criteria refer to the company-society relationship, and more directly to the people with whom it has a close relationship, such as its employees, so that the reconciliation of work, family and personal life has a place here.²⁴

All sustainability strategies -whichever framework the company adopts- and social co-responsibility actions form a virtuous circle, since the incorporation of gender equality in business operations fosters employee satisfaction and the full exercise of human and labor rights, while at the same time promoting inclusive economic development.

Countries' economic growth

Numerous studies have provided evidence that greater economic participation of women will bring economic growth to countries:

- Research undertaken by the International Monetary Fund²⁵ found that employment discrimination against women is economically inefficient and costly even for men, and that their income would also benefit from enhanced female participation. In countries with larger gender gaps in labor participation, closing those gaps would add 35% on average to Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

22 United Nations (2024). Sustainable Development Goals Available at: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/es>

23 The acronym ESG refers to the English words environmental (environmental), social (social) and governance (governance), criteria used to evaluate the performance and impact of companies in these areas. Although they are most often found that way, they are also known as ESG in Spanish. To learn more about this, see: Global Compact Spanish Network (2023). What are the acronyms ESG or ESG? Available at: <https://www.pactomundial.org/noticia/la-sostenibilidad-empresarial-desde-las-siglas-asg-o-esg>

24 Global Compact Spanish Network (2022). ESG criteria and their relationship with the SDGs Available at: <https://www.pactomundial.org/noticia/criterios-esg-y-su-relacion-con-los-ods>

25 Ostry, J. D., Alvarez, J., Espinoza, R. and Papageorgiou, C. (2018). Economic Gains from Gender Inclusion: New Mechanisms, New Evidence. Available at: <https://www.imf.org/~media/Files/Publications/SDN/2018/SDN1806.ashx>

- According to data from the McKinsey Global Institute,²⁶ if the gap between women and men in the workforce were closed in Latin America, the GDP of the countries in the region would increase by 34% by 2025.
- In an analysis carried out by the Inter-American Development Bank²⁷ on Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru, it was found that the implementation of measures to close gender gaps in the labor market would contribute to increasing economic growth. The creation of care services for children that allow their mothers to enter gainful employment would contribute to increasing the GDP of those countries between 4% and 6%, while the implementation of affirmative actions to eliminate discrimination against women and promote productivity would increase it between 13% and 22%.

Companies currently face multiple challenges: demanding and competitive markets and value chains, global trends that modify consumption, the need to have the best talent and to demonstrate their commitment to the community. Faced with these challenges, they have the opportunity to take advantage of the potential of gender equality as a strategy to improve results, increase the well-being of staff and make their corporate social responsibility evident.

What is needed for companies to benefit from this potential through the implementation of co-responsibility measures that promote work-life balance? The first step is a cultural change, so that the implemented actions work in the long term within the organization.

²⁶ McKinsey Global Institute (MGI) (2017). Where will Latin America's Growth Come From? Available at: <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/employment-and-growth/how-to-counter-three-threats-to-growth-in-latin-america>

²⁷ Bustelo, M, Flabbi, L., Piras, C. and Tejada, M. (2019). Female Labour Force Participation, Labour Market Dynamic, and Growth. Available at: <https://publications.iadb.org/en/female-labor-force-participation-labor-market-dynamic-and-growth-lac-0>

3. Organizational culture supportive of co-responsibility

One of the main challenges when promoting actions for the reconciliation of work, family and personal life with co-responsibility in any organization is to break with the inertia of the pre-existing work culture. Difficulties such as resistance to change and to new ways of doing tasks, ignorance, a limited vision in terms of the responsibility of the private sector with sustainable development, as well as gender biases and stereotypes, can affect the strategy's contribution to the well-being of staff, the redistribution of care and the promotion of co-responsibility.

It is necessary to generate conditions conducive to building an organizational culture favorable to social co-responsibility, which will allow actions to be developed on a solid basis and to function in the long term, bringing about a true transformation. This section describes seven essential elements that facilitate the design and implementation of social co-responsibility measures in companies:

- a) Committed Leadership
- b) Assessment of personnel needs
- c) Social co-responsibility policy
- d) Training on gender equality and co-responsibility
- e) Design of policies and measures with a gender perspective
- f) Measuring the impact of measures
- g) Gender approach as a cross-cutting theme

a) Committed Leadership

Both research on equality, inclusion and diversity and the people who operate these programs within organizations strongly agree that committed leadership is a key and indispensable element in making co-responsible care practices - and all gender equality efforts in general - work successfully. True leadership commitment lays the foundation for the incorporation of the gender approach as a cross-cutting theme in the operations and policies of companies.

Having the support of senior management is recognized as fundamental in transforming the work culture and ensuring that co-responsibility actions remain in place over time. This allows for resources to be allocated, responsible teams to be appointed, new policies to be approved and to go beyond superficial changes. If, furthermore, the people who lead the company, including mid-level managers, use the measures, their example will serve to foster them among staff. An executive taking their paternity leave or requesting permission to take their child to a medical appointment or attend a school board, will be the most effective ambassador to promote employees at all levels to take advantage of the benefits offered by the company as to engage actively in parenting.

b) Assessment of personnel needs

The actions that companies implement to contribute to the reconciliation of work and personal life must meet the real demand of workers. When designing and enforcing measures without taking this into account, there is a risk that they will not be used, efforts will be wasted and those who make up the organization will continue to face tensions in the different spheres of their lives, which in the end will be felt in the company's results. It is important to listen to people and design practices tailored to their needs.

An assessment will make it possible to identify conflicts that personnel are experiencing in fulfilling their work and personal responsibilities; care-giving needs; whether they have a partner, children or dependents in their care; whether they are aware of the measures established in the legal framework and any additional ones granted by the company, together with the processes for using them; the confidence they feel to take them without repercussions; as well as the personnel's opinion as to the most useful measures. In addition, an assessment that integrates data disaggregated by gender, age, working hours, job position and area will yield results that help to understand in detail the particular configuration of the company.

Participatory Gender Assessments (PGAs)

The Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM) of the OAS has been working to strengthen institutions, through the undertaking of Participatory Gender Assessments (PGA) that aim to contribute to the mainstreaming of the gender equality approach in the work of institutions.

The CIM/OAS methodology for conducting PGDs makes it possible, based on documentary analysis and the use of qualitative and participatory methodologies (group and personal interviews, workshops, etc.), to report on the degree to which the gender equality perspective is integrated into the various organizational processes by the actors normally involved in the operation of the institution. This includes, in addition to policy and program areas, administrative, finance and human resources areas.

The analysis is comprehensive insofar as it considers the mainstreaming of the gender approach in the institution's activities, whether in programs or projects, as well as in internal cross-cutting activities and throughout the institution's daily work. The process culminates with the preparation of an action plan, which outlines a roadmap for the institution to define in detail how the mainstreaming of the gender approach will be carried out in a given timeframe. This process includes the activities, responsibilities, and indicators to carry out the corresponding monitoring and assessment.

c) Social co-responsibility policy

It is necessary to have an official co-responsibility policy in the company that explicitly states the commitment to equal opportunities and treatment, and to the reconciliation of work, family, and personal life as one of the elements of co-responsibility, which is incorporated into the pillars of the company. It should include the measures, leaves, permissions, and services offered by the organization as part of the labor legislation and as additional benefits; to whom they are addressed; the formal procedures to access them; and the objectives to be achieved.

This contributes to legitimizing co-responsibility measures and ensuring that they are not one-off practices, yet rather a component of the company's equality, inclusion, and diversity strategy. It also avoids discretionality since they are not left to the discretion of individual bosses, who could limit or discourage their use by personnel. Likewise, having this in writing and making it known to everyone endows them the opportunity to demand compliance from the company. Outwardly, communicating this joint responsibility policy may act as a stimulus for attracting talent.

d) Training in gender equality and co-responsibility

Promoting the transformation of organizational culture necessarily requires awareness-raising and training actions that lead people to a process of reflection and learning about their ideas, attitudes, and behaviors. These tools can be used to identify unconscious biases, make situations of inequality between women and men visible, question gender roles and stereotypes, and recognize that equality as a human right benefits everyone. It is also useful for employees to learn the reasons why these issues are addressed, the purpose of implementing measures and the gaps they seek to close, how this impacts the work they do and their work environment, and how they can apply it.

In terms of co-joint responsibility in caregiving, awareness and training play an essential role in incorporating into the organization a care perspective where the role of the company as a co-responsible actor is addressed, the idea that it is a task for women is eliminated and it is promoted as a collective issue, the difficulties faced in the employment market by those who provide care are exposed, and care is assumed as a dimension for sustaining life.

e) Design of policies and measures with a gender perspective

All actions that are implemented with the purpose of providing workers with the possibility of integrating the different areas of their lives, without affecting or limiting their participation in one or the other, can have the opposite effect, and even reproduce roles and stereotypes, when the gender perspective is not incorporated into their design. It is often mistakenly thought that co-responsibility refers to maternalistic practices, which reinforce the role of women as the only ones responsible for the upbringing and care of children, only for specific events such as birth or illness, and aimed at a traditional type of household.

The objective of designing measures with a gender approach is to promote equal opportunities and treatment, to promote the redistribution of household and care work, and to break down roles and stereotypes. Likewise, the practices carried out from this perspective are characterized by being aimed at all personnel with and without family responsibilities, considering that people are not only divided into work and family; they respond to the needs according to the diversity of households; they are not restricted to certain events, they go beyond the care provided to daughters and sons, since it is recognized that the demand for care also comes from other people and is different, and they are flexible to be adapted to the stages of life. For example, they contemplate that employees may need to provide care for the elderly, people with disabilities, or people with whom they are not related, whether they live with them or not.

f) Measuring the impact of measures

While increasingly more companies are striving to build working environments in which co-responsibility of care is a reality for all people and are implementing multiple initiatives, measurement is a less developed issue. As seen in the previous chapter, international studies have been conducted, yet at a workplace level it is rare to find information on what is happening internally: the use of measures, the fulfilment of goals, and the quantification of the positive impact on personnel and business management.

Gathering data, defining indicators, monitoring them, and evaluating the results with respect to the targets set is highly useful. On the one hand, to identify progress or setbacks, and to have information that allows for decisions to be made to adjust the measures; and, on the other, to add arguments in favor of co-responsible companies and generate a business case that makes the benefits visible to senior management. Having this information helps to dispel doubts about co-responsibility measures that break with the culture of presenteeism and long working hours.

A selection of measurements that can be taken are: staff turnover, absenteeism, use of the different types of leave by gender, use of other measures related to the balance of work-life and teleworking, perception of the work environment, commitment to the company, satisfaction and perception with regard to co-responsibility measures. In order to have an in-depth analysis on the impact of these measures for women and men, it is essential that the data be disaggregated by sex. Likewise, observing the presence of women and men at the different hierarchical levels and in the several departments serves to analyze the participation of each other as an effect of a work environment being conducive (or not) to equal opportunities and treatment.

g) Gender approach as a cross-cutting theme

The inequality of opportunities and treatment between women and men is usually handled as a separate problem, detached from the organization's operation in business aspects, such as products and services, operations, market, value chain and results. Therefore, equality tasks are assigned only to certain areas, often human resources, or corporate social responsibility. In this same logic, and in accordance with what was mentioned in the first chapter, the care perspective has been left out of the pillars of the organizations and care is treated as a women's issue.

To overcome this vision, it is essential to incorporate the gender approach as a cross-cutting theme in the company, which contributes to recognizing the reality of women and men, achieving equality, and closing gender gaps, since all this has a bearing on the organization's work.

In this sense, it is important to mention that the mainstreaming process itself requires a broader internal gender equality policy or strategy, which seeks to influence all areas and activities of the company, and where co-responsibility and reconciliation between work, family and personal life is one of the lines of work that make it up. An example of this are the global and local instruments that promote business practices in favor of equality between women and men in all areas of management, such as the Principles for Women's Empowerment, the gender equality seals linked to the technical standards in this area in each country, and other initiatives promoted by both the public and private sectors. The proposals and concepts contained in these guidelines are compatible with these and instruments and seek to contribute to the work that companies are doing when adopting them, since in all of them there is a clear coincidence in the recognition of co-responsibility as a substantial axis.

Likewise, it is recommended that the process of gender mainstreaming in the company be led by experts in this area. Even in organizations where it is possible to have areas related or dedicated to these issues, having experts with a training or professional profile in gender issues will provide support and guidance to the areas and in general to those who lead the incorporation of the gender approach and the seven essential elements.

Mainstreaming+ Strategy for Equality and Transformation of the CIM/OAS²⁸

The Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM) of the Organization of American States (OAS) published its Strategy of Mainstreaming+ for Equality and Transformation, which seeks to strengthen the leading role of the National Machineries for the Advancement of Women (National Machineries) in the mainstreaming of the gender perspective in public policy. Likewise, this strategy seeks to catalyze some elements of mainstreaming, including the articulation of a solid architecture; the deepening of strategic alliances; inter-sectoral, multi-actor and territorial co-responsibility; an intersectional approach that raises the voices of all women; and the allocation of the necessary budget to make mainstreaming effective - all to advance on the transformative path towards equality.

The CIM promotes and accompanies national mainstreaming processes, builds bridges between different actors and supports the National Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women in the implementation of strategies and concrete actions to make gender mainstreaming effective in all State activities, bringing to the table the differentiated needs and realities of all women.

The mainstreaming of gender equality in the States must start from certain unavoidable premises:

- The logic of mainstreaming is framed in **human rights and State's obligations**.
- Mainstreaming is achieved through **multiple strategies**. It is not about the design and implementation of a single strategy, but of several that affect the permeate the different orders and powers of government, that include social actors and the private sector, and ensure that in no public intervention assumes that the gender mainstreaming is unnecessary.
- The need for **coordination** between these strategies, actors, resources, plans and programs, based on a normative and institutional scaffolding that enable spaces of dialogue at the highest level, and in coordination with the social and private sectors.
- The need to have a **solid architecture** to be able to advance in a coordinated manner in all State instances, and with clear responsibilities for the institutions.
- The need to **coordinate strategies on a territorial level**.

Continued on the next page ►

28 https://www.oas.org/es/cim/docs/Estrategia_transversalidad_ESP-24.pdf

- The importance of **multilateralism**, as a motor of change that relaunches transversality, bringing multiple experiences and as a catalyst for transformation processes.
- The need for **strategic alliances** that advance the interests of mainstreaming for equality, in a coordinated manner and with multiple actors that contribute in a co-responsible manner.
- The importance of allocating **budgets** to make mainstreaming effective and to be able to launch concrete actions.

Action Plan for Equal Opportunities and Treatment Between Women and Men in the Workplace

One of these initiatives that seeks to promote the incorporation of the gender approach in a comprehensive way in companies is the “Action Plan for equal opportunities and treatment between women and men in the workplace” prepared by Expertise France and the Embassy of Denmark in Mexico.

It is a roadmap that aims to serve the private sector as an instrument that allows them to materialize their commitment to the construction of inclusive work environments and spaces, free of violence and discrimination, where the balance between work, home and personal life with co-responsibility is promoted, through actions axes that steer the implementation of measures in favor of equal opportunities and treatment between women and men. The 10 thematic action axes proposed and structured in this action plan are:

Axis 1. Assessment on equal opportunities between women and men.

Axis 2. Proclamation in favor of equality, inclusion, and diversity.

Axis 3. Equal opportunity talent management processes

Axis 4. Incorporating gender perspectives into teacher training

Axis 5. Joint responsibility for work, family, and personal life

Axis 6. Prevention and management of workplace violence

Axis 7. Measuring the Working Environment

Axis 8. Internal and external inclusive communication

Axis 9. Gender-responsive value chain, products, and services

Axis 10. Action plan monitoring

Cerda, A. and García, G. (2023). Action plan for equal opportunities and treatment between women and men in the workplace Axes of action and business practices to boost gender equality. Expertise France – Danish Embassy in Mexico.

4. Measures to foster social co-responsibility in companies

Co-responsibility measures as transformative actions

Companies around the world are already implementing various actions to respond to the needs of care and work-life balance of their staff, achieving favorable effects on satisfaction and productivity. In making these efforts, it is important that the co-responsibility measures implemented are part of a substantive transformation strategy, i.e., that they seek to truly contribute to the reconciliation of work, family, and personal life with social co-responsibility and, therefore, to equal opportunities between men and women.

To ensure that the measures implemented in the workplace promote co-responsibility in the private sector, and thus inclusion and equality, and contribute to closing gender gaps, it is essential to look at them with an analytical view that is free of traditional constructions about what women and men have to do in the workplace and in the home. In other words, it is essential to confirm that they do not reproduce gender stereotypes, but that they effectively contribute positively to the modification of the following aspects:

- **Redistribution of unpaid caregiving and household tasks.** They encourage the co-responsible engagement of men in domestic and care work within households, reducing the burden for women.
- **Changes in gender roles and stereotypes.** They contribute to modifying the idea of men's role as providers of the household, promoting their responsibility in care work and their participation as a right that has been denied to them, and the vision of women's role as exclusively in charge of these activities.
- **Involvement of women in the labor market.** They encourage the insertion and permanence of women in the world of paid work, occupying roles that have traditionally been set aside for males, by generating conditions of equal opportunities and helping to eliminate the barrier that the burden of domestic care work represents for them to develop in their professional trajectories.
- **Caregiving perspective.** They recognize that care sustains life and that caring, receiving care and self-care is a right; that all people need care depending on the stage of the life cycle in which they find themselves or for specific situations of dependency; that there are different types of care and some demand more than others; and that care is not a woman's job, nor are households solely responsible for it.
- **Conciliation.** Promote the conciliation between the work and personal spheres, in addition to the family sphere, considering integrality and individual development needs.

A selection of examples of joint responsibility measures

Co-responsibility measures in companies can be as varied as the creativity of decision-makers and resources allow. The following are examples of these measures, grouped into four types: **labor flexibility, maternity and paternity, care and infrastructure and support for services** that are already being implemented in some companies and that allow us to identify the importance of the articulation between measures in the private sector and the necessary progress in public policies to favor the social co-responsibility of care.

It should be noted that since the conditions and administrative procedures of each organization are different, rather than describing procedures to carry them out, this classification is offered to facilitate an analysis of the existing possibilities, which motivates adaptation to the reality of each work center.

Flexibility in the workplace: These are measures that the organization offers to personnel to adapt their working schedule, the distribution of hours worked per week or the physical place where they carry out their professional activities in line with their personal and family needs.

- Flexible start and finish times.
- Reduced working day.
- Compressed work week.
- Prioritization of results-based work.
- Respect for the working day, scheduling of training and meetings within the working hours and the right to disconnection.
- Accumulation of overtime during peak periods to be used as personal time afterwards (bag of hours).
- Teleworking.
- Hybrid working day (On-site and virtual).
- Virtual and asynchronous training.
- Virtual work meetings.
- Work shared by several people.
- Leave of absence for unforeseen situations.
- Leave days for specific events.
- Certain number of days per month or per year previously established for personal purposes.
- Unpaid leave to take personal time for extended periods with the possibility of returning to the same post or an equivalent one.

Work flexibility measures are also applicable to address issues related to maternity and paternity, cases in which it is necessary to provide care or unexpected situations of daily life. In general, this flexibility makes it possible to attend to a variety of domestic, personal and family matters.

Maternity and paternity: These are practices that seek out a contribution to joint responsibility for workers' family and professional life when they become parents due to birth or adoption of children, including the furthering of measures set forth in labor legislations.

- Extension of maternity leave.
- Extension of paternity leave.
- Extension of leave of absence and timetable for breastfeeding.
- Progressive return to the workplace after the postnatal period.
- Reduced working schedule after the postnatal period for mothers and fathers.
- Refresher courses upon return to the workplace.
- Leave for accompaniment to medical appointments during pregnancy.
- Leave to care for children in case of illness or to attend medical appointments.
- Leave to deal with educational situations affecting children.
- Parental leave (leave that can be taken alternately by mothers or fathers for extended periods of time).
- Childcare activities that fit in with work schedules, e.g., homework clubs.
- Vacation programs for sons and daughters.

The rest of the measures complement these practices, since they also help to reconcile employment with the responsibilities of being a mother or father. They stand out as a category in themselves because of the relevance of these experiences in people's lives, as well as the consequences for women's labor participation and men's exercise of parenthood.

Care: These measures are specifically aimed at those who provide care for people with disabilities, serious illnesses, chronic conditions or elderly people and other related events. They also include self-care.

- The chance to take advantage of a series of remunerated permits to:
 - Recover from an illness
 - Attending or accompanying medical consultations and diagnostic tests
 - Be present in the event hospitalization or surgical operations
- Paid hours or days for the care of persons in a situation of illness, disability, chronic illness or dependency.
- Unpaid leave to provide care for extended periods of time with the possibility of returning to the same or an equivalent position.
- Programs for the return to the labor market of people who had a career break or were absent for unpaid care work.

These measures should be applicable not only to married couples, but also to unmarried couples, family members and unrelated persons, whether or not they live in the same household, as in the case of single-person households.

Infrastructure and support for services: In general, they are benefits to help reduce the burden of care work and the time spent on these activities, through the provision of services, subsidies or economic support that also reduce the monetary costs associated with the provision of care services.

- On-site childcare centers or day care centers.
- Lactation rooms and breastfeeding promotion.
- Agreement or tuition subsidy for day care centers and home care.
- Agreement or payment subsidy for day care centers or day care centers for people with disabilities and the elderly.
- Temporary financial support for workers caring for a seriously ill person or a person in need of end-of-life care.

These benefits should be directed to all personnel that apply to them, both for women and men, without reinforcing the traditional role of women as caregivers. In addition to considering the care needs of other population groups, not only children.

In addition, companies can offer other benefits in addition to the above that contribute to reducing the burden of domestic and care work, saving time and money, or providing access to health and recreation. For example: free transportation to the workplace, subsidized sale of prepared food to eat in or take away, on-site medical services and health fairs, low-cost eye exams and glasses, agreements with gyms near the company, sports activities, discounts at laundromats and home repair services. However, it should be kept in mind that these measures function as an extra stimulus, since the practices described above have greater potential to help people to harmonize their work, family and personal lives with social co-responsibility and to organize their time in the way they decide or according to their needs.

Experiences in Latin America Latina in matters of social co-responsibility for caregiving

In order to put social co-responsibility in care into practice, it is useful to have references. Knowing what other companies in the same sector or in other sectors, even in different countries, are doing to promote social co-responsibility, the challenges they are facing or what the key factors have been, is a way of learning from other experiences. Companies that have been working on this issue for the longest time can serve as an example to illustrate a practical case and as an argument for positioning co-responsibility in business strategy.

The following are eight co-responsibility measures that are currently being implemented by companies of different profiles -local, national and multinational- established in Argentina, Chile and Costa Rica. It should be noted that these countries have experience and significant work between the public and private sectors in labor equality and, specifically, in reconciliation with co-responsibility. Each measure describes practices, challenges faced and valuable recommendations for companies that want to start or are working on promoting equality and social co-responsibility within their organizations.

Finca La Hilda

Country: Costa Rica

Sphere of operations: Regional

Economic activity: Agriculture

Small, family-run firm engaged in coffee production of the highest standard, boasting more than 20 years on the market.

Measure: La Hilda Nursery

- **A quién está dirigida:** Todo el personal, fijo y temporal.
- **Who is it aimed at?** All staff, either temporary or permanent.
- **What does it entail?** The farm has a daycare center, La Hilda, which began operations in 2004. All employees have access to this service for their children between the ages of 1 and 12. Comprehensive care is provided during the workday, as well as food, learning, and recreation. It is worth mentioning that the country's legislation does not require daycare centers in the workplace, nor is it a common practice in other farms.
- The nursery has made it easier for more women to participate in the harvest, and has worked to break down the stereotype that farm work is not suitable for women. There has also been an increase in the number of female heads of household participating and child labor has been avoided, as well as the presence of minors in the plantations. The positive impact that this space has had extends to the permanent community of Finca La Hilda, to the harvesting community that arrives year after year, to the working mothers and to the children. The experience has been so successful that financial support has been obtained from a roasting company to maintain it, and it is common for workers to return each year, knowing that they will have a safe space to care for their children.
- **How the measure came about?** A reduced engagement of women in the sector, the relationship with gender roles and stereotypes, the problem of child labor, and the need to provide conditions so that personnel can work knowing that their children are being cared for. Gender equality is considered an achievement as a company, community and society.
- **Challenges regarding implementation:** Among the challenges they have faced are addressing gender stereotypes and roles regarding women's participation in field work; building confidence among staff about the nursery service; normalizing the presence of minors on the plantations; and measuring the impact of the measure in quantitative and economic terms, so that they can demonstrate the benefits to the outside of the farm and to their clients.
- **Measurement and results:** Greater economic benefit has been observed in the coffee harvesting population of women and family groups, lower absenteeism, improved performance, and a decrease in the barriers that women face in integrating into the labor force as a result of unpaid care work. In addition, greater staff satisfaction and a desire to return to work at the farm each year have been identified.

- In addition, actions in favor of equality between women and men and co-responsibility have been disseminated as an argument in the business strategy with exporting companies.

In accordance with their own experience, La Hilda Estate offers the following recommendations:

- Work on eliminating gender stereotypes regarding the types of work that women and men can perform, raising awareness and re-educating personnel to avoid resistance to new practices.
- Explicitly promote the fact that women have the skills and abilities to perform all types of work.
- Senior management should give the necessary time and resources to the teams responsible for implementing the measures. Leadership support is indispensable and is a factor that has been essential to the success of initiatives in the organization.

Essbio S.A.

Country: Chile

Sphere of operations: National

Economic activity: Healthcare Services

Year founded: 2000

Workforce: 1,219 (296 women and 923 men)

Instruments that encourage gender equality and joint responsibility in place in the company:

- Certification of the Chilean Standard NCh3262:2021 Management Systems: Management of gender equality and conciliation of professional, family and personal life.

Measure: Progressive postnatal term extended to mothers

- **Who is it aimed at?** Mothers whose postnatal leave has recently concluded.
- **What does it entail?** In addition to the prenatal and postnatal periods established by the legal framework in Chile, as part of the labor rights of maternity protection for female employees, the company offers its employees a progressive return to work, in order to facilitate their return to work.
- For the past 13 years, employees who return to work after the postnatal period do so gradually over a three-month period, during which the departure time is different and is adjusted until the regular timetable is reached, so that there is a reduction in the working day during this time. In the first month, the workday starts at 2:00 pm, in the second month at 3:00 pm and in the third month at 4:00 pm. For the fourth month the work schedule is normalized and the workers finish their workday at 18:30 hours. This initiative is communicated by the personnel area.
- **How the measure came about?** This is the result of Essbio's commitment to achieving gender equality, reflected in its participation in public initiatives such as obtaining the "Equal Conciliation" Seal from the Ministry of Women and Gender Equality, for being a company certified in the Chilean Standard NCh3262:2021 Management Systems - Management of gender equality and reconciliation of work, family and personal life.
- **Challenges regarding implementation:** As this is a measure that has been devised by the company's senior management, no difficulties were experienced, and the move has been well received.
- **Measurement and results:** An annual record is kept of female employees who have made use of this service, which is highly rated on their part. In 2022, the measure was used by 15 collaborators and in 2023 by 11.

Measure: Extension of the paternity leave and reduced working hours

- **Who is it aimed at?** Fathers of newborn children.
- **What does it entail?** In order to foster fathers' attachment to their children in the first month of life and promote their active role in household and care tasks, we offer them an extension of five additional days of paternity leave in addition to the five days stipulated by labor legislation. In addition, to complement this, a reduced workday is implemented for three weeks, so that employees end their workday 3.5 hours earlier than their regular schedule. Both practices apply in the case of adoption.
- To make use of this measure, parents must inform the personnel area of the approximate date of birth of their child. In this way, managers can schedule the distribution of the workload or, if necessary, consider replacement during this period of absence. The request for paternity leave is made through a digital platform where the leave is managed.
- **How the measure came about?** Based on the need to promote the co-responsibility of parents, especially in the first stage of their children's lives.
- **Challenges regarding implementation:** In order to consider the possible challenges, at the time of defining the measure, an evaluation of the impact it could have on the work teams was carried out. The challenge has been the awareness-raising part to get the message across to parents about the importance of using this benefit.
- **Measurement and results:** An annual record is kept of the employees who have made use of this benefit. In 2022 the measure was used by 19 employees and in 2023 by 26.

In addition, the company offers staff a "Leave for relevant activities", which is available to fathers and mothers to attend activities where their presence is required, whether family, medical or school issues of children; employees to attend medical consultations, examinations and outpatient treatments; and those who need to accompany family members who are elderly to perform special procedures.

Based on its own experience, Essbio Chile offers the following recommendations:

- To have the support of senior management.
- Raise awareness among people in leadership positions and keep them informed.
- The measures that are designed and implemented must respond to the real needs of the personnel to whom they are directed.

Grupo Mutual

Country: Costa Rica

Sphere of operations: National

Economic activity: Financial

Year founded: 1973

Workforce: 950 (488 women and 462 men)

Instruments that encourage gender equality and la joint responsibility in place in the company:

- Equal Opportunities Policy

Measure: Flextime

- **Who is it aimed at?** The entire workforce.
- **What does it entail?** It is implemented with the purpose of providing conditions for women and men to harmonize their work, family and personal life with social co-responsibility. It consists of offering personnel the opportunity to take care of personal or family situations, with the option of coming to work before or after their start time, after which their departure time is adjusted.

It is possible to adjust the working day to accommodate commitments such as school activities, medical appointments for children and family members. This applies both for fortuitous events and for situations that require a longer period of time, for example, taking care of other people or coordinating school start and end times.

To make use of the measure, people must make a formal request to their management indicating the time for which they need to apply the variation in the schedule and the reason, in order to keep statistics. After that, the management analyzes the case and checks that the working hours established by law are being complied with. Finally, the person is informed if the request is approved and the human development department is notified to generate the personnel action (document that supports and evidences the adjustments in the working day). Additionally, every six months the status of the request is reviewed to determine whether it is necessary to maintain it or return to the regular working day.

- **How the measure came about?** This is the result of getting closer to the personnel and actively listening to their needs. The personnel requested the possibility of having flexible working hours to attend to family situations, for example, the care and attention of children and people with disabilities. Therefore, the needs and requests of the personnel, accompanied by statistics, were presented to the company's senior management, who approved the measure.
- **Challenges regarding implementation:** Considering the company's activity, its scope of operation, with a nationwide presence, and the fact that a large percentage of its personnel work in customer service positions, the main challenge was to make the measure applicable to the company's entire population.

- Currently, all personnel can make use of flextime, with some adjustments in the customer service area, to whom it is not possible to apply the measure of entering and leaving later. However, some other alternatives are being implemented so that this area can also enter later or leave earlier in the workday.
- **Measurement and results:** A register of cases is kept in order to identify the population that most requests this measure, the information is disaggregated by sex and the reason for the request is noted.

Measure: Telework and alternating working centers

- **Who is it aimed at?** The entire workforce.
- **What does it entail?** From the moment they join the company, personnel are offered the possibility of performing remote work anywhere in the country and abroad, as well as the option of a hybrid workday of four days of teleworking and one that is performed in person, which applies to positions that, by their nature, allow performing work tasks in this way, either totally or partially.

To make use of teleworking, personnel must fill out a form where ergonomic and environmental conditions are evaluated. Once these measures are complied with, the request for approval is sent to the immediate supervisor, who analyzes the request based on the nature of the position, and if it is considered viable, it is approved via the system. Subsequently, the human development area receives a notification and proceeds to prepare the telecommuting agreement.

To work from abroad, the person must make a request to the immediate boss, indicating the number of days and the time difference, which should not be more than three hours. A photo showing the ergonomic conditions is required. If the request is approved, the manager notifies the human development area to collect statistics. If requests are not approved, an objective condition must be provided to support the decision.

There is also the option of working in an alternate center, i.e., if it is necessary to attend to work situations in person, it can be done in offices near the place of residence. For this purpose, there is a mapping of the offices that have the appropriate conditions for this purpose. The interested party must reserve the space via the system.

These measures help people to invest less time and money in moving, as well as to organize other aspects of their personal and family life, attend to emergencies or household responsibilities. Remote work abroad even makes it possible to take advantage of work or educational opportunities in other countries, either personally or by accompanying a family member.

- **How the measure came about?** From the analysis carried out by the human development department of the situations raised by the personnel and as a result of the study of market trends in terms of actions that promote the well-being of the personnel.
- **Challenges regarding implementation:** Among the main challenges was the process of convincing personnel of the importance of having adequate ergonomic conditions, taking

active breaks and maintaining a balance between work and family and personal life, within the framework of integral health. For their part, managers had to be convinced that staff productivity would not be affected by teleworking. Added to this is the great challenge of continuing to strengthen the corporate culture and interpersonal contact.

- **Measurement and results:** Statistics are generated with information on the number of personnel teleworking, so it is known that 375 people out of 942 use this measure, which represents 40% of the personnel.

In line with their own experience, Grupo Mutual offers the following recommendations.

With regard to the flextime measure:

- Creating greater proximity to the personnel and listening to their needs.
- To have a regulation that supports the measures and that is transversal to all the company's processes and, at the same time, allows flexibility, since each case has its own particularities.
- The process is constantly reviewed in order to identify opportunities for improvement.

With regard to the telework measure and using alternate working centers:

- Definition of which working posts, due to their nature, are viable options for telework and which are not.
- Establish clear objectives for measuring staff performance.
- Consistently work on the importance of work disengagement and the proper balance between work tasks and personal life.

ArcelorMittal Acindar

Country: Argentina

Sphere of operations: Multinational

Economic activity: Metalworking

Year founded: 1942

Workforce: 2,500 (220 women and 2,280 men)

Instruments that encourage gender equality and la joint responsibility in place in the company:

- Human Rights Policy
- Diversity and Inclusion Policies.
- DEIB (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging) Action Plan, featuring a gender equality axis.
- Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs).

Measure: Extension of the benefits of maternity leave

- **Who is it aimed at?** All ArcelorMittal Acindar employees and controlled companies.
- **What does it entail?** As of 2023, ArcelorMittal Acindar offers female employees a longer period of maternity leave than that provided for in Argentine labor legislation. The extension is for three additional months, so that female employees can access a total of six months of paid leave. The purpose of this is to contribute to improving the quality of life of the people they care for and those who need care. It is also considered essential to provide the conditions for them to continue their professional careers in the organization while reconciling their family life.
- When making use of this measure, the company pays for the three months covered by this extension. This payment will be in accordance with the last remuneration prior to the beginning of the maternity leave and will take into account the guidelines of general increases that may have been granted.
- **How the measure came about?** An opportunity for improvement was identified in the maternity leave period guaranteed by law and its implementation occurs within the framework of the diversity strategic pillar.
- **Challenges regarding implementation:** This measure is part of the cultural transformation process and of a series of actions that the organization has been carrying out since 2019. Therefore, raising awareness of the issue and involving leadership is a challenge.
- **Measurement and results:** The rate of return to work of women who have used extended maternity leave is measured. In terms of qualitative results, this measure has been very well received by the company's employees.

Based on its own experiences, ArcelorMittal Acindar offers the following recommendations:

- Having on-hand the conviction and support of senior management.
- Involvement from leadership downwards.
- Have an assessment of the current situation of the organization and the composition of the staff.
- Communicate effectively the measures and the reasons for their implementation.

Laboratorio Bagó de Chile

Country: Chile

Sphere of operations: Multinational

Head Offices: Argentina

Economic activity: Manufacture in the pharmaceutical industry

Year founded: 1947

Workforce: 535 (273 women and 262 men)

Instruments that encourage gender equality and la joint responsibility in place in the company:

- Certification of the Chilean Standard NCh3262:2021 Management Systems: Management of gender equality and conciliation of professional, family and personal life.

Measure: Leave during the working day

- **Who is it aimed at?** The entire workforce.
- **What does it entail?** Leave for different situations, with the purpose of giving people in the organization the possibility of attending to family commitments or personal matters during working hours, without this representing an occupational risk factor.
- A number of hours are made available to employees so that they can attend activities related to their children, such as school activities or medical appointments; the latter also applies to other people who are in a situation of dependency.
- To access leave during working hours, employees must contact their manager and fill out a form to register their time away from the facilities.
- How the measure came about? An assessment was carried out to identify useful measures for personnel from the co-responsibility approach, and overall it was concluded that leave during working hours is the most valued practice, since some activities in which personnel are interested in being present coincide with working hours.
- **Challenges regarding implementation:** The main difficulty was the cultural change of the management. In order to reduce resistance, it was important to understand the benefits of leave for individuals and the company.
- **Measurement and results:** A record is kept of the type of leave, number of hours used, dates and the information is disaggregated by sex of the user. In 2021 a total of 995 requests were received, of which 59% were made by women and 41% by men; while in 2022 the percentages were 62% and 38%, out of a total of 856 requests. In the latter year, the disaggregated data showed that in the case of female workers, the reason for the leave was to attend a medical consultation in 167 cases and in 364 cases for other reasons; these figures were 135 and 190 in the case of male workers.
- Related to the above, the 2022 work climate survey showed that 88% of personnel perceive that in the company they are encouraged to balance their work and personal lives, and

more than 90% indicated that people are treated fairly regardless of gender, age or social status. This opinion is strengthened by the results of the study “Best organizations to integrate personal life and work” 2023 of Fundación Chile Unido, in which 64 organizations participated and Laboratorio Bagó de Chile was ranked number nine in the ranking of large companies.

Based on their own experiences, Laboratorio Bagó de Chile offers the following recommendations:

- Knowing the needs of most of the personnel according to their family group.
- Provide training to people in co-responsibility, to work on gender prejudices, biases and stereotypes.
- It is an investment, not an expense. When people are more fulfilled, they are much more creative, productive and committed.

Edwards Lifesciences in Costa Rica

Country: Costa Rica

Sphere of operations: Multinational

Head Offices: United States

Economic activity: Manufacture of medical devices

Year founded: 2017

Workforce: 2652 (1552 women and 1100 men)

Measure: Caregiving network

- **Who is it aimed at?** Operational staff.
- **What does it entail?** This is a social responsibility program in coordination with a non-profit organization, which provides operating personnel with access to care and education services for their children under 6 years of age. It offers to cover 90% of the monthly payment for these services and prioritizes the attention according to the socioeconomic or care situation. For this purpose, the organization conducts a socioeconomic study. One of the main objectives of the program is to retain the talent of women in the company.
- **How the measure came about?** The shortfall in terms of childcare support was identified as one of the main reasons people left the workplace, most notably women, so it was decided to look for options to offer to the staff.
- **Challenges regarding implementation:** The company has seen limited government support to implement the model, as the eligibility criteria for public programs leave out segments of the population.
- **Measurement and results:** Monitoring is done through indicators of absenteeism and turnover, or is observed in the impact of the program on aspects such as the change in the general well-being of families. Some figures are: 95% of the participants are women, 49% of whom are heads of household; 58% of the workers have resumed their studies; and 100% of the participants indicate that they have seen improvements in the balance between work, family and personal life. In addition, there has been a decrease in absenteeism.

In view of their own experiences, Edwards Lifesciences in Costa Rica offers the following recommendations:

- To resort to the support of professionals, such as digital platform companies or human resources software.
- To count on the support of the management to implement the program.
- Define criteria for inclusion in the program to support those most at risk.

The pathway towards centrality in caregiving and co-responsibility

Putting into practice the concepts that have been tackled throughout these guidelines is a complex yet necessary task. The availability of resources, inertia from within the organizations, the specific hurdles each company faces due to its size, the sector in which they engage or the specialization of the working post, can become barriers to the implementation of a comprehensive co-responsibility strategy. Nonetheless, it is unthinkable to live in a world without caregiving.

Understanding that there are challenges to achieving social co-responsibility and putting them in the discussion reminds us that it is a progressive task. Triggering co-responsibility actions in companies requires, above all, changing the way in which organizational processes are approached. The seven key elements that facilitate the design and implementation of measures -committed leadership, listening to the needs of personnel, designing a policy, initiating awareness-raising, designing measures with a gender perspective and using this perspective as a transversal axis- have much more to do with transformations in the organizational culture than with budgetary issues.

The great diversity of existing measures - and those yet to be created - makes it possible to take into account the requirements of the size of the business, the areas and the specialization of the positions, as well as the needs of those who make up the organization. The essential thing is that all personnel should have access to work-life balance, even if it is not through the same practices or procedures. In other words, the principle of co-responsibility must be respected by creating tailor-made benefits.

The sole pathway involves advancing towards a society and job market that acknowledges the central nature of caregiving and which contributes to its redistribution and to the reduction of the burden on women. Taking up a founding premise of the Inter-American Model Law on Care, it is urgent to place care at the base of the social structure and lay the foundations for a new understanding of the economy, with a greater focus on the processes that sustain life. This guide therefore calls on all companies committed to equality, inclusion and diversity to take a step beyond the minimum guaranteed by the regulatory framework and invites them to take on the challenge of transforming the world of work through social co-responsibility that allows for a true harmonization between work, family and personal life. This work also allows us to show how the private sector can also support the public policy reforms identified as necessary by the entities in charge of gender equality in order to advance not only in terms of social co-responsibility for care, but also to advance in terms of equal opportunities and favor women's economic autonomy.

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