FRAMEWORK REPORT

Earthcare

A Relational Approach to the Intersection of Care and Climate

ihtimam

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Introduction

As İhtimam Derneği, we do not view care merely as an activity taking place strictly between human beings, a chore relegated to certain individuals, or a technical service delivered to recipients. We are vulnerable living beings who can only survive through care; this inherent vulnerability reminds us that life is sustained not by detached, independent individuals, but through reciprocal, life-affirming bonds. Our survival depends not only on each other's labor, but also on water, soil, air, and the continuity of thriving ecosystems. We conceptualize earthcare as tending to these relational webs (with ourselves, with the people around us, and with all living beings and ecosystems we coexist with) while acknowledging our shared vulnerability and fairly distributing the responsibility of sustaining life.

The climate crisis renders the fragility of these webs increasingly visible with each passing day. Yet prevailing approaches address this reality through fragmented lenses: even when intersectional, care studies often remain confined to human-to-human dynamics, leaving out collective and more-than-human care practices along with the ecological commons. Climate policies, on the other hand, overlook human care; even when engaging with local and traditional knowledge, they systematically exclude the vital, experiential insights of caregivers and care receivers who attend to the sick, raise children, and support older adults (those who sustain the fabric of everyday life) from decision-making spaces. We developed this guide to examine how the relational, vulnerability-attuned perspective offered by care ethics can bridge these missing links and transform climate policies.

Throughout this guide, we explore how the climate breakdown alters people's daily lives, disrupts relational care networks, and undermines the living conditions of other species; grounded in these interconnections, we articulate concrete policy recommendations for national and international climate frameworks. Rather than presenting a definitive or finalized model, we offer this guide as an open invitation to collective reflection and action, one meant to evolve through diverse lived experiences and varied ways of knowing. Because the kind of earth we will inhabit together is directly bound to our willingness to embrace vulnerability and assume collective responsibility toward all relationships that sustain life.

1

Why Do We Need Earthcare?

> Legal frameworks and climate policies often operate on the assumption of a self-sufficient individual. In reality, life is sustained through our interdependence with one another, other living beings, and ecosystems. Care must not turn into a sacrifice expected exclusively from women. The duty of law must be to ensure that the responsibility of care is shared publicly, that caregivers and care-receivers participate in decision-making processes, and that other living beings are valued in their own right, rather than merely for the benefits they provide to humans.
>
> **Özlem Altıparmak | Lawyer, Ecofeminist**

1. Crises Addressed in Isolation

The climate and biodiversity crisis and the care crisis are among the most pressing societal challenges of our time. Yet these crises are largely debated in separate arenas, handled by distinct institutions, and addressed through disjointed policy frameworks.

In reality, the climate and biodiversity crisis directly alters the material conditions under which care takes place.

Extreme heat waves intensify the care needs of older adults, disabled people, and individuals living with chronic illnesses. Droughts complicate daily domestic care tasks and food production. Disasters disrupt public care services while shifting heavier responsibilities onto families and communities.

Conversely, care is never detached from ecological conditions. Human nourishment, sanitation, healing, and personal safety depend on access to clean water, energy, healthy soil, and functional ecosystems.

The core problem lies in treating interconnected living conditions as compartmentalized policy domains. Climate strategies often fail to assess their broader repercussions on care, while care policies rarely account for their ecological dependencies.

This divide carries concrete consequences: a solution formulated within one silo often generates new burdens, unmet needs, or systemic inequalities in another.

2. Anthropocentric Limits of Care Policies

Care policies predominantly concentrate on early childhood education, eldercare, disability support, assistance for individuals with specific support needs, or household management. In recent years, intersectional frameworks emerging within feminist scholarship and the agendas of multilateral institutions have paved vital ground by illuminating disparities across migrant care workers, rural women, disabled people, and varied age groups. The universal accessibility and quality of care services, alongside the equitable redistribution of care work, sit at the very core of these deliberations.

All of these advancements remain indispensable. Yet despite these progressive strides, care policies continue to operate within an almost strictly anth

ropocentric perimeter. Even when intersectionality is operationalized in its broadest sense, care is conceptualized merely as an exchange that takes place between human beings; non-human living beings and ecological systems are either relegated to the margins or kept entirely outside the analytical frame.

Yet care cannot take place independently of the ecological conditions that make it possible, nor from the other living beings with whom we coexist.

For instance, when evaluating the service quality of an eldercare center, we examine staffing levels, accessibility, and healthcare provisions. But do we also recognize the building's thermal resilience against extreme heat, the state of its water resources, the surrounding green spaces, or the trees, birds, and stray animals finding refuge there as integral components of that care space? Or, when planning urban care services, do we account for the fact that living environments are shared not only by humans, but also by animals, plants, insects, and rivers?

Confining care to a human-to-human activity renders invisible the ecological commons and the cohabiting species that sustain it. What we need is a "more-than-human and multispecies" ethos of care, one that does not limit intersectionality to social differences among humans, but instead embraces humans, other living beings, and ecosystems as an interdependent web of life.

3.Invisible Care in Climate Policies

Climate policies aim to reduce emissions, transform energy systems, reinforce infrastructure, and prepare societies for the impacts of climate breakdown.

Yet how these strategic decisions reshape everyday care relations is rarely accounted for in policy design.

For instance, an early warning system deployed against extreme heat may advise residents to remain indoors. But how can someone living alone, lacking cooling infrastructure, or relying on another person's daily physical support implement such a directive?

Similarly, when preparing disaster evacuation plans, is sufficient thought given to how people requiring mobility assistance, their primary caregivers, and their companion animals will be evacuated safely? These examples illustrate that a solution appearing technically sound on paper can prove entirely unworkable across varied lived realities.

The genuine efficacy of climate policies hinges not merely on infrastructural resilience, but on the ability of communities to sustain their daily lives and care networks.

When care needs, alongside the lived experiences of those meeting them, are left out of decision-making spaces, climate interventions risk entrenching existing societal inequalities.

4. The Missing Links of Just Transition

Tackling the climate crisis demands more than just replacing energy sources; it requires transforming production, consumption, transportation, urban environments, and the world of work.

There is growing recognition that this transformation must be just. However, just transition debates predominantly focus on the employment and income security of workers in coal mines or heavy industries, systematically overlooking unpaid care work and the reorganization of daily life.

In reality, the primary barrier preventing women from accessing the green economy, new green jobs, and professional reskilling programs is their disproportionate care responsibilities and acute time poverty. In a system where childcare, eldercare, and support for the ill are shifted onto households, and where inadequate infrastructure forces people to spend hours securing water and food, women simply cannot participate in this transition without robust care infrastructures in place.

Furthermore, the economic costs of this transition are quietly offloaded onto households. For instance, rising energy tariffs do not merely mean higher utility bills for a low-income household; when heating or cooling the home becomes unaffordable, the daily conditions of caring for children, older adults, and individuals with chronic health needs deteriorate sharply. Compensating for these systemic shortfalls falls squarely on women's increasing unpaid labor. Similarly, climate-induced displacement, lost livelihoods, and disruptions to public services dramatically drive up care needs while shrinking the time and resources available to meet them.

At the same time, care work (such as healthcare, education, and social care, which are inherently low-carbon sectors) fails to secure its rightful place within the green jobs paradigm of just transition frameworks.

A just transition cannot be reduced to managing the social costs of phasing out fossil fuels; it is inextricably bound to how care responsibilities are redistributed among households, the market, and the state. Unless care labor and care infrastructures are treated as foundational pillars, the burden of ecological transition will continue to be subsidized by households and the unpaid labor of women.

5. The Invisible Experience in Local Knowledge Debates: Care Wisdom

There is growing recognition in climate policy that local knowledge, community experiences, and ancestral practices must be incorporated into decision-making processes. However, within these discussions, "local knowledge" is often narrowly confined to domains such as agricultural production, seed saving, forest stewardship, or meteorological observations.

Beside these land-based practices lies another profound repository of knowledge that sustains life through moments of crisis: the experiential knowledge of everyday caregivers.

Those who know best how to regulate the body temperature of an older adult with hypertension during an extreme heatwave, how to manage sanitation and nourishment under restricted water access, how to safeguard a patient on life support during a power outage, or how to soothe the sensory overload of an autistic child during a disaster are precisely the caregivers dedicating daily labor to them.

Likewise, it is these relational care networks that track which sheltered corners stray animals use to cool down, when they need water, or what specific assistance vulnerable neighbors require during emergencies.

This embodies a direct survival knowledge, far more immediate than technical indicators, meteorological alerts, or abstract risk heatmaps.

Nevertheless, when climate adaptation frameworks, disaster response strategies, and urban resilience plans are drawn up, caregivers are rarely invited to the table as knowledgeable agents. Instead, caregivers and care-receivers are categorized merely as "vulnerable targets in need of protection." What they know, how they navigate daily crises, and which webs of relations they keep alive remain unacknowledged in policymaking spaces.

Genuine social resilience against the climate crisis cannot rest solely on engineering interventions or land-based traditional knowledge. We urgently need the knowledge of caregivers, who reproduce life each day, intimately understand vulnerabilities, and nurture reciprocal ties, to be recognized as an indispensable pillar of climate governance.

6. Care Confined to the Nuclear Family and the Risk of Reproducing Inequalities

Care policies and dominant social conventions largely construct care through the lens of traditional nuclear family structures and conventional gender roles.

The central problem here is not merely that care is privatized within the family; it is the risk that even newly developed public assistance frameworks fail to dismantle the assumption that care is ultimately a woman's responsibility. Even when social support schemes or formal care services are introduced, the governing mindset frequently aims no further than "lightening the burden on women" rather than radically restructuring care relations on an egalitarian foundation. When the belief that care is an inherently "natural" feminine domain goes unchallenged, policy interventions, well-intentioned as they may be, risk fixing the caring subject exclusively as the woman and reinforcing entrenched gender norms. This dynamic leads to the instrumentalization of care labor, meaning that whenever crises, disasters, or economic hardships hit, systemic shortfalls are once again absorbed and compensated for by women's unpaid labor.

Furthermore, this narrow approach centered on mother-child dynamics and the nuclear family risks erasing many other care networks that actively sustain daily existence. Chosen kinships, neighborhood mutual aid, community solidarity networks, the specific support needs of single-person households, and multispecies relationships shared with companion animals are

regularly shut out of institutional schemes and policy blueprints.

Shielding care from these pitfalls requires far more than merely easing the existing load; it calls for a deep transformation in our cultural definitions of who is responsible for care. Instead of treating care as a self-sacrifice expected of women, we must reconceptualize it in all its diversity as a collective, relational responsibility, one shared equally across genders, institutions, and society as a whole to sustain our common life.

What Is Needed Beyond Existing Approaches?

The intersections between care and climate are not an entirely new discovery. Longstanding scholarship in feminist economics, care ethics, and climate justice has persistently contested the systemic invisibility of life-sustaining labor and the natural world. Calls to build climate-resilient care infrastructures and position the care economy as an integral pillar of a just transition are now voiced with growing urgency.

Across policymaking spaces and grassroots practice, institutional inertia remains stuck in the same place. Decisions continue to be handed down from isolated silos; the invisible bodily and mental burdens of care work are offloaded onto households, particularly onto women and marginalized groups; while street animals and the soil are left entirely out of the equation.

The solution cannot be to patch a thin layer of climate awareness onto existing care policies, or to tack care onto climate action as a minor social assistance bullet point. Safeguarding life demands the capacity to evaluate, from the earliest design phases, which relational ties a decision nurtures and which it severs, whose lived experience it validates as legitimate knowledge, and onto whose shoulders it quietly shifts the burden.

What is required is not another bureaucratic sub-item, but a foundational ethical ground that places life at its core.

In the next chapter, we explore how care ethics creates space for these inquiries, and how, from this vantage point, we can construct earthcare as a transformative framework.

2

What Is Earthcare?

> I believe that extending care to the earth begins with rethinking ourselves within the relationships we cultivate with nature and other living beings. We are part of the web of life on this planet, and our existence depends on countless beings and the reciprocal relationships between us. Becoming aware of these relationships brings with it an attentive regard for the needs, habitats, and distinctive ways of being of other living entities. It is invaluable that our practices of learning from the earth, living alongside it, and caring for it are shaped by this understanding. To achieve this, we need to question our anthropocentric perspective, reconsidering what it means to coexist with other beings and what responsibilities we can assume within this shared life.
>
> **Burcu Meltem Arık | Climate and Education Specialist**

Ethics of Care: A Relational Framework

Many of our societal institutions, policies, and economic systems assume the human being to be an independent, self-sufficient individual capable of meeting their own needs. Needing others, on the other hand, is predominantly associated with specific conditions such as childhood, old age, illness, or disability.

In reality, none of us sustain our lives alone. From the preparation of the food we eat to our recovery from illness, from the raising of children to the continuity of daily life, our existence rests upon the labor and support of countless people. Moreover, we do not merely need others; who we are, what opportunities we hold, and how we live are fundamentally shaped within our relationships.

Feminist care ethics challenges the myth of the independent and self-sufficient individual. It approaches dependency, interdependence, and care relations as ordinary conditions of human life. Vulnerability is intimately bound to this discussion: throughout their lives, humans remain susceptible to shifting conditions, capable of experiencing harm, and in need of support from others.

However, vulnerability does not produce identical outcomes for everyone. Income, gender, disability, age, living environment, and access to support systems differentiate both the risks people confront and their capacity to navigate them.

A relational understanding of life does not reject autonomy. Instead, it recognizes that people's ability to have a voice over their own lives is often made possible precisely through supportive relationships.

Care ethics is not an abstract framework seeking to dictate what is right from afar; it is a concrete practice shaped by our bodily experiences, habits, and capacity to understand the needs of others, one that can be learned, cultivated, and deepened over time.

This approach inevitably raises political questions: Whose needs are recognized? Who provides care? Who takes decisions? How are care responsibilities and resources distributed?

Because care is never just a matter of good intentions. It demands recognizing needs, assuming responsibility, offering attentive responses, and critically assessing whether what has been done truly meets those needs.

Earthcare: Relational Responsibility Beyond Humans

Are the relationality, vulnerability, and interdependence illuminated by care ethics relevant solely for understanding human-to-human relationships?

The sustenance of a human life depends not only on the labor of other people, but also on clean water, healthy soil, breathable air, other living beings, and functional ecosystems.

Moreover, these relationships cannot be reduced merely to human needs.

A river may serve as a source of drinking water or agricultural irrigation for human communities, but it is simultaneously a living habitat for fish, plants, and countless other organisms. A forest is not merely a carbon sink; it is an intricate ecosystem where diverse forms of life dwell in reciprocal relation with one another. The reality we confront today cannot be reduced to a climate breakdown alone; it is a profound biodiversity crisis marked by accelerating species extinction, severe habitat loss, and the rupture of ecological webs. Framing climate targets exclusively around carbon emissions and technocratic accounting falls into the trap of viewing forests, wetlands, and oceans strictly as "carbon sinks." In truth, these spaces are shared webs of coexistence where countless species continuously give and receive care. Earthcare refuses to separate the climate crisis from biodiversity loss; it conceptualizes the continuity of human care alongside the vitality of living networks extending from pollinating bees to soil microbiota.

Human beings are not detached entities standing outside of nature, merely exploiting or protecting it from a distance; we are an inseparable part of the web of life on earth. Drawing upon this conceptual foundation, we at İhtimam define earthcare as follows:

Earthcare is an ethical and political framework that does not confine care strictly to human-to-human relationships, but instead approaches humans, other living beings, and ecosystems as integral parts of an interconnected web of life. Interrogating anthropocentrism and conceptualizing care alongside multispecies webs of existence does not mean sidelining universal human rights, civic safeguards, or social rights won through historical struggles. Rather than eroding human rights, we understand earthcare as a foundational approach that secures the ecological and material conditions necessary for those rights to materialize, reinforcing human dignity on a deeply relational ground.

This orientation does not signify bestowing care upon nature from an external vantage point; it embodies cultivating active responsibility toward the very relations of life of which we are a part.

- **The care relationship we nurture with ourselves:** Attending to our own health, vital needs, and the material conditions necessary to sustain our lives. Self-care does not mean managing everything in isolation; it encompasses exercising agency over our own lives through the support of others.
- **The care relationships we build with other people:** Giving care, receiving care, and sustaining life collectively with one another. These bonds are never confined strictly to families; they embrace both paid and unpaid care labor, community solidarity networks, and public care services.
- **The care relationships we establish with the earth:** Nurturing our connections with other living beings, ecosystems, and life-enabling entities such as water, soil, and air. This requires more than simply extending human care toward nature; it demands recognizing that our very survival remains fundamentally bound to these ecological relations.

These three dimensions of care are not detached from one another. Our ability to care for ourselves often relies on the support of others and a viable environment. Our capacity to care for others rests upon our own health, time, and resources. Damage to ecosystems, in turn, reshapes both human care needs and the living conditions of other species.

This responsibility calls for evaluating other living beings beyond the utilitarian benefits they offer to humans. Still, it does not assume that we intuitively know what they require or that we can effortlessly decide on their behalf. A decision taken to protect an ecosystem can alter the livelihoods of the local community living there. An intervention made to enhance human safety may disrupt the habitats of other species. Needs do not always align harmoniously. For this reason, earthcare does not advocate extending an identical form of care to all beings, nor does it claim to offer a single correct answer to every conflict. Instead, it demands striving to understand the specific needs of diverse lives, paying careful attention to power relations, and assuming accountability for the

systemic outcomes of our decisions.

The foundational proposition of earthcare is to treat relationality, vulnerability, and interdependence not as peripheral exceptions to be handled after the fact, but as baseline conditions in the design of systems.

Drafting a disaster response plan around diverse support needs and care networks, rather than on the false assumption that everyone can move independently. Planning a city by considering the habitats of other living beings, not merely the mobility patterns of humans. Evaluating an energy policy by its repercussions on community care needs and relational networks, alongside emission targets and economic costs.

These represent only a few of the structural decisions that begin to shift once we understand life through relational webs rather than through autonomous individuals and compartmentalized systems.

Five Principles of Earthcare

We articulate earthcare not merely as an abstract mode of thought or an aspirational statement of intent, but as an ethical and political framework designed to serve as a compass across decision-making, policy development, and implementation processes.

This framework recognizes that care is never a unilateral service delivered from on high by an autonomous, self-sufficient actor; it is a deeply relational process acknowledging our shared vulnerability and the webs of interdependence that sustain life. Caregivers and care-receivers do not represent fixed identities divided by rigid boundaries; over the course of life and throughout moments of crisis, these roles intertwine, transform, and unfold through reciprocity. Across different junctures of our lives, each of us is both a care-receiving and a care-giving subject.

1. Attentiveness and Visibility

Whose needs, which beings, and what relationships are we failing to see?

In care ethics, care fundamentally begins with paying close attention, noticing, and bearing witness to what has been overlooked. However, both market mechanisms and conventional climate policies typically account only for monetized assets or directly quantifiable physical damages. The invisible care labor quietly upholding life in moments of crisis, the emotional weight carried inside households, daily ties of solidarity, and slow-moving ecological loss often fall completely outside institutional evaluation frameworks.

Earthcare demands attuning not just to easily quantifiable indicators, but to tacit dependencies, acute time poverty, and indirect structural impacts.

For instance, when evaluating an extreme heatwave, focusing exclusively on thermometer readings and hospital admission rates remains wholly insufficient. One must perceive the daily survival struggles of disabled people and older adults confined to their homes, the additional physical and mental strain caregivers shoulder at the cost of their own health, street animals suffering severe water stress, and the parched urban canopy as an integrated reality. Attentiveness is the foundational step toward inviting invisible labor, excluded identities, and other living beings to the policymaking table.

2. Fair Distribution of Responsibility

Who shoulders the burden of sustaining life and weathering crises?

The reality of our shared interdependence with one another and with ecosystems does not mean that responsibilities are distributed equally across society. Care labor, access to resources, decision-making authority, and accountability for ecological breakdown reflect deep structural disparities. Extending care does not mean ignoring these systemic inequities by dispersing responsibility across an abstract "everyone," nor does it mean extracting fresh sacrifices from already precarious women and households in the name of solidarity.

The mounting care burdens spawned by climate chaos, prolonged droughts, or sudden disasters cannot simply be offloaded onto the assumed elasticity of women's unpaid labor or intra-familial devotion.

This principle directly challenges the privileged irresponsibility that insulates those holding power and capital from daily caregiving obligations. The care weight generated by systemic crises and green transitions must be equitably redistributed beyond the narrow confines of the nuclear family across the state, the market, municipal governments, and civil society, firmly securing care as a public right and a collective obligation.

3. Relational Knowledge

Whose knowledge, lived experience, and memory shape decisions?

Understanding a need cannot be achieved solely through the detached observations of technical experts or top-down risk assessments. Care is fundamentally an epistemic capacity in its own right; it generates a distinctive form of survival and crisis management knowledge forged within the very relationships that sustain life.

This principle brings two foundational domains of knowledge to the center of decision-making processes:

- **Fluid roles, and the knowledge of caregivers and care-receivers:** In climate adaptation debates, "local knowledge" is routinely restricted to agricultural practices and seed stewardship. In reality, those who understand best how to protect a patient reliant on life-support equipment during an outage, an older adult experiencing acute hypertension during a heatwave, or an individual with sensory processing sensitivities in a disaster, or how to manage hygiene under severe water cuts, are everyday caregivers. Nor are care-receivers passive or dependent objects; they carry authoritative experiential knowledge of their own bodies, their well-being, and their specific needs during crises. Furthermore, these roles are never static: someone receiving support can simultaneously be an active caregiver offering emotional fortitude or coordinating neighborhood solidarity. This reciprocal and experiential knowledge must carry equal weight within formal governance mechanisms.
- **The relational knowledge of multispecies life and ecosystems:** Rivers, forests, or street animals cannot speak in human languages. Still, their needs can be attuned to and integrated into decision-making through attentive local ecological observations, biodiversity monitoring, and interspecies memories of shared life.

Genuine participation does not mean treating subjects embedded in care relations as symbolic window dressing; it requires embedding those holding the wisdom of life-sustenance as essential co-designers of climate governance.

4. Responsiveness and Reciprocity

Does our intervention genuinely nurture well-being, and does it safeguard the autonomy of those affected?

Within care ethics, an intervention is never validated solely by the good intentions of the caregiver; it is verified through the tangible response of the care-receiver (whether a person, a community, or an ecosystem). A climate intervention that appears technically "sound," "rational," or "green" on paper can inadvertently generate unforeseen care burdens or deepen structural inequalities on the ground.

Earthcare rejects the assumption that responsibility concludes once a policy has been rolled out. It demands continuous monitoring, active listening, adaptive feedback loops, and the institutional flexibility to revise decisions whenever necessary.

Equally important, this principle acts as a safeguard against care devolving into an instrument of domination and paternalism under the guise of protection. It remains acutely aware of the power asymmetries present within care relations, refusing the convenience of reducing one party to a helpless dependent to be rescued or deciding on their behalf. In disaster preparedness and climate planning, this requires honoring the autonomy, agency, and choices of disabled people and older adults rather than patronizing them. In urban greening efforts, it calls for safeguarding the shared habitats of both human neighbors and more-than-human inhabitants without disruption. Responsiveness means holding ourselves accountable to the real imprint an intervention leaves on those it touches, honoring the foundational reciprocity embedded in every care relation.

5. Repair, Continuity, and Acknowledging Loss

What do we strive to restore in the wake of harm? How do we confront irreversible losses?

Rebuilding collapsed buildings or physical infrastructure in the aftermath of a disaster does not mean life simply returns to its former state. Climate-induced shocks shatter more than built environments; they tear apart neighborhood solidarity networks, ties of mutual aid, caregiving routines, and ecological relationships shared across species.

Earthcare approaches recovery not merely as physical and economic reconstruction, but as the repair and continuity of the relational fabric that sustains life.

At the same time, repair must never succumb to

the illusion that every loss can be compensated for. An extinct species, a desiccated wetland, or the absence of loved ones lost in a crisis cannot be brought back by any technological intervention. While this principle advocates preventing harms and sustaining community care networks, it simultaneously demands an honest reckoning with the grief, accountability, and irreducible limits surrounding irreversible loss.

These five principles do not offer abstract formulas or rigid checklists. Moving far beyond the intended technical outcomes of decisions, they establish an enduring ethical ground that interrogates which lives are fortified, which relationships are severed, whose labor is rendered invisible, and how responsibilities are redistributed.

3

How Climate and Care Affect Each Other?

The climate and biodiversity crises intensify the care labor required to sustain life and fundamentally alter the material, spatial, and ecological conditions under which care takes place.

Extreme heat compounds the health monitoring needed for older adults, disabled people, and those with chronic illnesses; drought escalates the time and labor spent securing and storing water; and food crises heighten the struggle to prepare nourishing meals on constrained budgets. In moments of disaster, evacuating individuals with mobility restrictions, ensuring the continuity of electricity-dependent medical equipment, and rebuilding shattered care arrangements give rise to urgent responsibilities.

These repercussions do not affect only those caring for others; they also constrain the self-care individuals need to maintain their own well-being, driving acute time poverty and emotional exhaustion. Consequently, the crisis simultaneously fractures the relationships of care directed toward ourselves, toward one another, and toward the earth.

These shifts are not experienced evenly across society. Intersections of income, gender, age, and disability deepen vulnerability, leaving the mounting weight of care to fall disproportionately upon women, who already shoulder this labor without compensation.

In this section, we examine how the climate crisis transforms care labor, upon whom it imposes hidden costs, and how it impacts interspecies webs of life through concrete thematic intersections, drawing upon the first-hand testimonies and practical daily wisdom of our association's Care Wisdom Advisory Board members, frontline care workers, and community advocates.

Water Crisis and Drought: Adaptation Policies, Shared Hygiene, and Everyday Care Labor

Drought and water stress do not represent merely technical infrastructure problems measured by reservoir levels; every moment water is restricted or shut off transforms directly into a crisis of care. When the tap runs dry or access to clean water becomes constrained, the labor required to secure drinking water, maintain hygiene, prepare food, and protect the sick multiplies. This infrastructure void does not resolve itself; managing, storing, and rationing limited water generates fresh, invisible shifts of care work inside the household.

This deficit directly strains the daily lives of caregivers within homes. The non-negotiable hygiene needs of a bedridden patient, an infant, or a menstruating individual fall heavily onto the physical labor of caregivers, who are forced to carry jugs, heat water on the stove, and ration every drop. Individual conservation calls frequently heard across environmental campaigns, such as "consume less water" or "use cloth diapers," fail to account for the hours of scrubbing and cleaning labor these recommendations impose on women at home. The additional time and energy consumed by fetching water and maintaining hygiene erodes the hours caregivers could otherwise devote to rest, education, paid work, and their own well-being, entrenching existing inequalities.

Impaired water access also undermines personal self-care and bodily autonomy. For instance, for a wheelchair user with limited mobility or a patient relying on medical equipment that requires regular sanitization, the interruption of safe running water poses grave health risks while rendering personal hygiene far more dependent on the assistance of others. Furthermore, this dynamic reaches far beyond households; it disrupts core care institutions like hospitals, schools, and daycare centers, intensifying the workloads of institutional care workers.

Beyond the threshold of the home, drought directly imperils other living beings and interspecies relations of care across the earth. As rivers recede and wetlands dry up, the habitats of fish and birds vanish, while evaporating puddles across paved cities leave street animals stranded. The survival of these non-human neighbors frequently hinges on the voluntary efforts of local residents setting out water bowls on their doorsteps. As the hydrological cycles of ecosystems fracture, nature's regenerative capacity is paralyzed, weakening

the shared web of life that sustains human and more-than-human communities alike.

Ultimately, drought does not merely reduce the quantity of usable water; it intensifies the care labor upholding life while draining the regenerative capacities of both humans and the earth. In climate adaptation policies, we urgently need public infrastructure that refuses to offload the burden of water conservation onto household caregivers, guarantees uninterrupted water security for vulnerable groups with intensive care needs, and upholds the common right to water for all living beings.

> **When the water gets cut off, life does not simply grind to a halt for us; on the contrary, it doubles in weight. You cannot wait for water to flow from the tap to change a bedridden patient or keep pressure ulcers from getting infected. Hauling jugs of water, warming it on the stove, and trying to wash the patient without hurting them takes hours of my day. When drought warnings come on the news, they tell us to 'conserve water' on television, but no one ever speaks about how you cannot ration the water needed to clean a sick person, or how my back and arms are utterly broken when that water fails to run.**
>
> **Nuray Atmaca | Member of the Care Wisdom Advisory Board, İhtimam Association**

Extreme Heat and Health: Urban Heat Islands, Caregiver Labor, and Public Cooling Commons

Extreme heatwaves are commonly discussed across the public sphere through broken temperature records or hours spent in air-conditioned rooms; in reality, this quiet crisis translates into an invisible, relentless health and care vigil inside homes. As temperatures surge, the human body struggles to maintain its thermal equilibrium, generating direct, life-threatening risks especially for individuals with chronic conditions such as cardiovascular disease, hypertension, and asthma, as well as for older adults, pregnant people, and infants. Managing these emerging medical perils falls to the unbroken attentiveness of household caregivers, who measure blood pressure, track medication schedules, monitor fluid intake, and strive to keep the patient cool at the critical threshold before hospitalization becomes unavoidable.

This vigil turns into an exponentially heavier physical toll within households enduring energy poverty. In homes where running an air conditioner is out of the question due to high electricity bills, and families are trapped in uninsulated, poorly ventilated spaces, staying cool becomes an unattainable luxury. Soaking cloths to place on a patient's forehead against the threat of heatstroke and respiratory distress, constantly adjusting curtains and windows throughout the day, and sitting through the night by the bedside of a sleepless child or older relative pushes caregivers to the limits of physical and emotional endurance. Public appeals for individual energy conservation fail to see that, in low-income homes without mechanical cooling, this gap is compensated for through the sleeplessness and physical exhaustion of the caregiver. Rushing to keep others alive, caregivers defer their own hydration, nutrition, and rest, falling into a profound crisis of self-care.

When the crisis spills beyond the threshold of the home into the streets, urban inequities become starkly pronounced. Across urban heat islands transformed into literal ovens by expanses of asphalt and concrete, sidewalks stripped of tree canopies, shade, and accessibility ramps make venturing outdoors impossible for wheelchair users, parents with strollers, and older adults. Blistering metal and concrete surfaces obstruct mobility for those with physical disabilities, while the absence of accessible, air-conditioned public shelters traps people inside suffocating apartments. In those same streets, cats, dogs, and birds succumb to heatstroke unable to find shade or water upon the scorching pavement, leaving their survival abandoned to the voluntary care of compassionate neighbors. As municipal greenery withers without irrigation, the capacity of urban ecosystems to naturally cool the city breaks down in tandem.

Prevailing climate and health action plans attempt

to manage extreme heat through little more than generic advisories to "avoid going outside at midday" or by scaling emergency room capacity. Confronting heatwaves demands targeted energy subsidies for those living in uninsulated housing and people relying on electric medical equipment, the establishment of neighborhood-scale, climate-controlled, shaded public cooling commons where all community members and animals can take refuge free of charge, and preventive health policies that lift the compounding weight of heat-induced care from the shoulders of households.



When the temperature reaches 40 degrees, the electronic system of my motorized wheelchair can overheat and lock up. In moments like these, I realize that my mobility does not depend solely on me or the device I use. The asphalt I move across, the shade of a tree I can take refuge under, accessible public spaces, and the technology I rely on... they are all interconnected. This experience reminds me that independent living does not mean needing nothing; it becomes possible only within relationships of care that acknowledge our interdependencies. When envisioning climate-resilient cities, care, accessibility, and diverse lived experiences must be an integral part of that vision.

Ayrin Erciyas | Co-Nurturer, İhtimam Association



During heavy downpours, as I walk back after dropping my children off at school, the sound of rain hammering against my umbrella drowns out the auditory cues I rely on to perceive my surroundings and navigate. In the summer months, extreme heat, the inability to anticipate where shaded areas might be, and scorching bus stops turn into deep anxieties for both my own well-being and the health of my children.

Sıraç Erberk | Member of the Care Wisdom Advisory Board, İhtimam Association

Agriculture and Food Insecurity: The Care of the Table, Soil Health, and the Double Burden on Small-Scale Producers

Drought, extreme weather events, and declining yields linked to the climate crisis are typically framed in international agricultural negotiations around harvest losses, supply chains, or food price indexes. Yet this disruption, which begins in the field, moves straight into the home across market stalls and kitchen counters, multiplying the care labor that nourishes and sustains life.

As food becomes increasingly expensive and access to sufficient, diverse, nutritious, and safe food grows harder, the daily routine of those who set the table turns into a heavy mental and physical burden. The responsibility of feeding and caring, placed on women through the gendered division of labor, weighs even more heavily under these conditions. Meeting the nutritional needs of children, older adults, or individuals with chronic illnesses on restricted budgets demands hours of navigating neighborhood street markets in search of affordable, fresh produce, chasing discounts, and carrying heavy bags. Further labor goes into sorting, canning, boiling, and transforming ingredients to make them fit for consumption. During food crises, women often reduce their own portions, reserving nutritious food for children or those they care for, leading to a direct sacrifice of self-care that jeopardizes the caregiver's own health and immunity.

In rural areas, this reality imposes a double shift on small-scale women farmers. Climate-driven drought, soil-depleting farming practices, and an agricultural model reliant on purchased seeds and chemical inputs threaten small producers' ability to sustain cultivation.

Under these circumstances, striving to maintain production in dried-out fields, watering crops with dwindling water resources, and nurturing produce, while simultaneously managing household meals, laundry, and caring for the sick, traps women in profound time poverty. Technical standards or certification processes introduced under the banner of agricultural sustainability frequently pile on new paperwork, monitoring, and audit tasks, all while continuing to obscure the double burden of care women carry both in the field and at home.

On an ecological level, the food question directly intersects with the care of soil and ecosystems. The agrochemicals and monoculture systems of industrial agriculture decimate microbial soil life, earthworms, groundwater reserves, and pollinating bees. Yet soil, water, seeds, and pollinators are vital parts of a shared cycle that sustains interconnected life. Nurturing this living fabric requires exchanging seeds and practical wisdom, arriving at collective decisions to safeguard soil and vitality, and distributing both the labor and responsibility of care equitably. As soil loses its capacity to regenerate and nourish, crops weaken, the nutritional quality of harvested food drops, and alienation between people and the land deepens. Ultimately, the lack of care shown to the soil and the earth circles back directly as contaminated food on the plate and rising care demands for communities.

In climate and agricultural policies, food security cannot be secured simply by balancing harvest tonnages or market commodity prices. We urgently need non-toxic, regenerative agricultural commons that recognize the domestic and field care labor of small-scale producers, provide women farmers with public care infrastructures and direct support, and prioritize the collective health of the soil alongside every pollinating creature.

> **Practicing community-based, agroecological agriculture in the heart of the city teaches us to live without imagining nature and the city as separate worlds. As we extend care to the soil, the seed, the bee, and the bird, we recognize ourselves as an integral part of this living fabric. Our commonality takes root as we share seeds, knowledge, and harvests, assuming the responsibility of care together. The nourishment our food provides at the table is completely inseparable from these relationships. By tending to the community garden, we are transformed in return, learning to nurture one another and the shared life we sustain collectively.**
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> **Nur Avcı | Campus Garden Community Member**

Energy Transition and Electrification: Mitigation Policies, Energy Poverty, and Medical Dependencies

Mitigation targets aimed at curbing the climate crisis prioritize the phase-out of coal and gas, building electrification, and energy efficiency standards. Yet when the costs passed onto utility bills are disregarded, energy policies directly trigger a crisis of care. When energy becomes unaffordable or inaccessible, households struggle to maintain fundamental life functions, while efforts to lower utility bills impose new, invisible shifts of labor onto household caregivers.

As energy poverty deepens, the material conditions of care deteriorate. In households unable to adequately heat or cool their homes, monitoring the health of infants, chronically ill individuals, and older adults becomes severely compromised. Being unable to turn on heaters means dressing children in multiple layers, carrying extra blankets, and grappling with cold-induced respiratory infections. Similarly, steep electricity tariffs translate into washing laundry and dishes by hand with cold water, the exhausting chore of stoking stoves, and hours of intensive physical labor primarily borne by women. Rushing to keep others warm and clean completely obliterates the caregiver's right to rest and the self-care owed to their own body. People are forced to hold the home together without ever finding the time to attend to their own exhaustion or illness.

The most critical threshold of this transition concerns electricity-dependent individuals and life-sustaining medical equipment. For people relying on respiratory

devices such as oxygen concentrators and nebulizers, dialysis machines, electric hospital beds, or motorized wheelchairs, a power outage is not a temporary inconvenience; it can mean the immediate cessation of breathing. During regional blackouts on stormy or sweltering days when the grid is overloaded, caregivers are left alone in panic, scrambling to find generators or backup oxygen cylinders. The patient's very survival hinges on this desperate vigil.

Beyond the doorstep, an unchecked energy transition batters the earth's own cycles of care. Large-scale mining and unregulated energy infrastructure projects developed in the name of the green transition encroach upon protected areas, olive groves, and forest ecosystems, fragmenting wildlife corridors and habitats. Excessive nighttime illumination and thermal pollution disrupt the behavioral cycles of birds and insects, while winter struggles of street animals seeking shelter beneath warm car engines or inside drainage vents lay bare the deep inequalities of urban heat and energy distribution. The ecosystem's inherent right to regenerate is once again sacrificed under the pretext of clean energy production.

International mitigation negotiations and energy transition blueprints frequently view energy solely through megawatts, emission quotas, and electric vehicle incentives. A genuinely just electrification requires guaranteeing uninterrupted and subsidized energy security for households reliant on medical equipment, recognizing the bodily toll that energy poverty exacts on women caregivers, safeguarding the fundamental right to heating and cooling as a public care service, and building energy commons that respect the regenerative limits of the earth.

> **Water cuts right when we are about to prepare dinner, unannounced power outages, and household electrical appliances suddenly shutting down disrupt our everyday lives. Having the battery of a motorized wheelchair drain or run critically low only adds to these struggles.**
>
> **Mehmet Efe Gülışık | Member of the Care Wisdom Advisory Board, İhtimam Association**

> **Sudden power outages completely upend our routines due to my daughter's fear of the dark, as a child with special needs. In moments of crisis, as a disabled mother, I have to exert extraordinary effort both to move faster and to safeguard my daughter's psychological well-being and sense of safety.**
>
> **Gizem Güzel | Member of the Care Wisdom Advisory Board, İhtimam Association**

Disasters and Extreme Weather Events: Loss and Damage, Evacuation Processes, and Fractured Care Networks

Extreme weather events such as flash floods, wildfires, and violent storms are typically calculated in international loss and damage negotiations through destroyed buildings, damaged infrastructure, and insurance compensation. Yet during and after a disaster, the deepest collapse occurs within the non-economic loss and damage (NELD) realm, through the shattering of the relational care networks that uphold life. Because standard emergency protocols presume everyone to be an independent, able-bodied, and swiftly mobile individual, people with restricted mobility, older adults, and their caregivers remain entirely invisible throughout evacuation processes.

When warning sirens sound or floodwaters rise, a caregiver's first instinct is not self-preservation; it is carrying a wheelchair down stairwells, lifting a bedridden relative, and gathering vital medications and medical devices. Decisions enacted by public authorities in moments of crisis likewise entrench gendered assumptions that dump the weight of care onto women. For instance,

granting administrative leave exclusively to "female employees with young children" in the wake of flood disasters reproduces the reflexive premise that caregiving is inherently the duty of women rather than men.

Disasters also directly paralyze an individual's ability to sustain their own autonomous self-care. People relying on motorized or manual wheelchairs, walkers, or prosthetics and orthotics are cut off from reaching safe zones due to the absence of accessible evacuation transit, impassable debris, loss of electricity for charging, and the unavailability of replacement parts. For those dependent on continuous medical consumables and treatments such as catheters, wound care dressings, respiratory support, or dialysis, the breakdown of supply chains or power grids poses immediate, life-threatening risks. Furthermore, the utter lack of accessibility across temporary shelters, tent settlements, and sanitary facilities makes managing toilet needs, personal hygiene, wound dressing, and privacy autonomously impossible, forcing care-receivers into deeper dependence on others. This dynamic represents both a profound violation of rights and an overwhelming open-air shift of care labor dumped squarely onto the shoulders of women across tent cities.

Another vital dimension dismantled by disasters is neighborhood solidarity, informal support systems, and interspecies commons of survival. Evacuating families to disparate cities or isolated camps instantly severs the trust between working parents and the neighbors who watch their children, dissolves intra-familial mutual aid for those caring for older or chronically ill relatives, and cuts off familiar healthcare networks. Stripped of these fractured networks of support, care responsibilities must be carried forward with drastically fewer resources, in deepening isolation and utter exhaustion. Denying companion animals entry into evacuation vehicles and emergency shelters coerces people into either abandoning their animal companions to die in floodwaters and blazes or risking their own lives by staying behind. Meanwhile, the wildlife and street animals lost across fire and flood zones paralyze the ecosystem's own regenerative cycles, leaving behind a profound multispecies grief.

When loss and damage policies evaluate catastrophe strictly through tallies of concrete and capital, they overlook this wounded relational fabric. Truly confronting climate disasters demands early warning and evacuation systems designed to encompass disabled people, older adults, individuals dependent on medical equipment, and multispecies households. It calls for equitable administrative policies that refrain from reinforcing sexist divisions of labor, temporary shelter sites designed around universal accessibility and care infrastructure, and dedicated public support mechanisms to repair the community bonds shattered in the wake of disaster.

> **In moments of disaster, I experience an overwhelming anxiety around safety: after an earthquake, I do not want them to rescue my children before me, because there is no knowing where they will take them.**
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> **Merve Erberk| Member of the Care Wisdom Advisory Board, İhtimam Association**

> **Let me put it this way: could a person actually fear snow falling? I am not saying feel sad, but genuinely fear it? Because if it snows, you cannot take your child to school, and they are forced to stay cooped up at home just like you**
>
> **İlknur Başaran| Member of the Care Wisdom Advisory Board, İhtimam Associationi**

> The burden of care rests predominantly on the shoulders of women, who strive to manage it through solidarity networks or struggles like advocating for daycare rights. Yet when a disaster strikes, all of these systems collapse. Even so, fundamental needs like hunger, hygiene, children's care, menstruation, clean water, shade, and privacy do not stop. Even in the direst tent conditions, women continue to labor to meet these necessities. Because temporary settlements are not organized on a neighborhood scale, existing support systems disappear, and because emergency response teams overlook care, even the most vital needs are bypassed. On top of that, holding the family's emotional and psychological well-being together falls squarely upon the woman. In short, if life continues at all in a disaster where everything has crumbled, it is sustained through women's care labor.
>
> **Gülfer Kırbaş | Çember Civil Initiative Association**

Just Transition and Green Jobs: Sharing Care Labor, Time Poverty, and the Purple-Green Nexus

Within international climate negotiations and national policy frameworks, just transition is framed almost entirely as the redeployment of a predominantly male workforce, who will lose their jobs with the phase-out of coal mines or heavy industries, into emerging green sectors. While technical "green jobs" are created in wind turbine assembly, solar panel manufacturing, or green hydrogen facilities, the care labor that reproduces life and sustains workers every day in the background remains completely erased. Yet without a warm meal cooked at home, clean clothes washed, and children, the sick, and older relatives looked after, no worker can leave a mine to step foot onto a green construction site.

This narrow understanding deepens women's exclusion from transition processes and exacerbates time poverty. Vocational training programs, technical courses, and employment initiatives designed for entry into green sectors remain practically out of reach for women unless accompanied by comprehensive childcare, eldercare, and disability support. Carrying the weight of unshared domestic care alone, women have neither the time nor the physical bandwidth to attend the training sessions demanded by new green careers. This dynamic completely wipes out the caregiver's rights to professional development, rest, and self-care, while the hidden costs of the transition continue to be subsidized by the bodily labor of women.

Furthermore, this dynamic risks reinforcing a gendered division of labor across debates on the green and purple economies. Delegating high-paying, engineering-focused "green jobs" to men, while reflexively consigning low-wage, emotionally exhausting, and precarious care ("purple") work to women, reproduces structural inequalities under a green veneer. While the low-carbon care labor that sustains life (healthcare, childcare, eldercare, social support) is devalued, capital-intensive, tech-driven investments are championed as the sole salvation. This logic merely takes shape as a modern iteration of the extractivist fossil mindset that views nature and human labor as inexhaustible, cost-free resources to be exploited; the earth's regenerative cycles and society's care needs are cast aside upon the very same ground of extraction.

A just transition cannot remain confined to compensating fossil fuel workers or installing solar fields. A genuine just transition requires an equitable sharing of care labor among households, communities, and the public sector; coupling green employment and vocational training with accessible public care infrastructures; securing care work as dignified, high-quality, low-carbon employment; and establishing egalitarian policies that prevent the green-purple divide from entrenching gendered hierarchies.

Urban Space, Mobility, and Climate Finance: Care-Centered Urbanism and the Redistribution of Resources

Across international climate summits and municipal urban agendas, climate investments are predominantly discussed in terms of subway lines, smart grids, electric vehicle charging corridors, or massive urban renewal tenders. While billions of dollars in climate finance flow into these mega-projects, the daily care routes and accessibility requirements sustaining urban residents are left entirely out of budget allocations. Yet the true climate resilience of a city cannot be measured solely by how much carbon emissions it mitigates; it is determi-

ned by how deeply it can extend care to its most vulnerable inhabitants.

Existing transportation and urban infrastructure continue to be designed around the daily rhythm of a single, full-time working male commuter moving back and forth between home and office. A caregiver's daily mobility, however, does not trace a simple linear trajectory. It is shaped by fragmented, stop-and-go, chained care journeys: dropping a child off at daycare, picking up medications for an older relative, visiting the neighborhood street market, and returning home. Pedestrian overpasses with steep staircases built under the rubric of climate adaptation, curbs lacking accessible ramps, narrow turnstiles, and infrequent public transit schedules systematically exclude parents with strollers, wheelchair users, and caregivers carrying heavy loads from urban space. Underpasses that flood into lakes during heavy downpours or shade-deprived bus stops baking in blistering heat turn the physical labor of caregivers into unbearable exhaustion. People are forced to expend immense physical energy simply to navigate from one point to another, depleting the very reserves they might have directed toward rest and self-care just to compensate for poor urban planning.

This spatial exclusion similarly paralyzes the city's other living inhabitants and urban commons. Large-scale infrastructure ventures bankrolled by climate finance frequently consume old-growth neighborhood trees, open soil patches, and retention ponds, transfiguring neighborhoods into concrete valleys. Groves where birds roost, shrubbery sheltering street animals, and porous surfaces that absorb rainwater are erased in the process. The absence of shaded public spaces where street animals can safely access clean water and food leaves interspecies coexistence dependent on the personal care and goodwill of local residents. When urban soil cannot breathe, torrential rainfall triggers disasters and summer heat morphs into deadly heat islands, circling back like a boomerang to strike human care anew.

International climate finance mechanisms (such as the Green Climate Fund and the Loss and Damage Fund) and municipal budgets must abandon the narrow model that channels capital almost exclusively into tech-heavy, hardware-focused projects. Genuine urban climate justice requires reallocating resources into neighborhood-scale care infrastructures (free public daycares, accessible cooling parks, seamless pedestrian and wheelchair networks), implementing multi-stop public transit networks designed around trip-chaining care journeys, and adopting care-centered urban planning policies that establish the city as a shared, reciprocal home for humans and all living beings alike.

> **Disabled parents are still predominantly perceived as mere care-receivers; yet we raise children, provide care, and shoulder deep responsibilities. Going outdoors in a wheelchair in a city that is already inaccessible during extreme heat or torrential rain requires calculating, step by step, the condition of the street and pavement, the shade at transit stops, the presence of accessible restrooms, and the physical safety of my child. Wheels sinking into mud in the rain, slick sidewalks, and insurmountable staircases turn care labor into an urban obstacle course. The fundamental reality decision-makers must recognize is this: the safety of disabled parents is the safety of their children.**
>
> **Gül Toksöz | Co-Founder, KolayKal Accessibility Initiative**

> **With whom do we enter into relationships of care? This question is a good starting point, but it does not go far enough: within the system we inhabit, whose lives do we deem worthy of care, and whose lives do we render precarious? While vulnerability is the shared existential condition of all living beings, it is not experienced equally. The violence, exploitation, and displacement endured by non-human animals are not merely byproducts of the ecological crisis; they are integral to human domination over other species. Taking this into account, an ethic of care cannot remain confined to repairing harm; it must transform the economic and political relations that generate that harm in the first place. The first step in crossing this threshold is recognizing animals not through their utility to human life or ecosystem services, but as subjects of their own lives. Earthcare attains its true meaning only to the extent that it challenges human authority to decide on behalf of other beings and transcends anthropocentric boundaries.**
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> **Aslı Alpar | Animal Rights Advocate**

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Climate Policy Recommendations from an Earthcare Perspective

To date, policies and action plans addressing the climate crisis have largely been shaped around greenhouse gas mitigation, technological investments, and financial risk models; the social dimension, meanwhile, has remained a side compartment tacked onto the end of agendas.

We propose a fundamental shift in our approach: care and the ethics of care are not an area of grievance to be compensated after the fact, nor are they an auxiliary social policy heading. They constitute a foundational design framework to be applied from the very moment decisions are put on the table, spanning energy, transportation, agriculture, and urban planning.

We cannot measure the validity of a policy solely by carbon reduction or secured finance. For us, the true criterion is how deeply that policy repairs the relationships holding life together, how thoroughly it protects living and non-living commons, and upon whom it levies the underlying burdens.

We understand care not as a one-directional service, but as a relational fabric encompassing our own bodily and emotional well-being and extending into the household, to the animal on the street, the neighborhood garden, the soil, the water, and our shared public spaces. When the breath of one is cut short, the burden of another multiplies; when the pores of the soil are suffocated, life on the street is left without water, and the exhaustion of a caregiver paralyzes the entire neighborhood web. The success of climate policies is tested precisely by how effectively they grasp this web of interdependence.

Rooted in this shared ground, we put forward core areas of transformation designed to allow both human communities and our common life to breathe across the field.

1. Adopting the Ethics of Care as a Foundational Design Principle

Relational Policy Design

We propose designing climate, energy, water, and urban transition policies not around detached, abstract individuals, but with deep regard for the webs of interdependence in which living and non-living beings rely on one another. Whenever an intervention is planned, we advocate asking from the very outset: "How does this decision affect care relationships within the household and across the community, whose time does it squeeze, and which shared spaces of life does it jeopardize?"

Recognizing the Shifting and Expanding Nature of Care

We propose an integrative approach that refuses to reduce care solely to physical and bodily tasks, recognizing the organizational labor and mental load that sustain households and neighborhoods, including planning, anticipating needs, provisioning, and managing crisis logistics. We advocate for the recognition of this invisible managerial dimension of care in policy design, ensuring that digital and technological tools such as remote monitoring, early warning systems, and smart grids do not become new surveillance demands that multiply the mental and physical strain on caregivers, but instead function as accessible, rights-based enablers that lighten this burden.

Accounting for Invisible Care Responsibilities and Costs

We must prevent public austerity measures, infrastructural constraints, and transition decisions from functioning as mechanisms that offset systemic deficits through the uncompensated labor of households, women, and local solidarity networks. We uphold as a core principle the prevention of climate solutions appearing inexpensive on official balance sheets while dumping invisible new burdens onto those sustaining life. We underscore that these costs extend far beyond immediate fiscal shortfalls, encompassing structural wearing effects ranging from caregivers' loss of income and indebtedness (caregiver poverty), to the postponement of their own health due to deprivation of rest and self-care opportunities (time poverty), the severance of social support ties leading to isolation (relational poverty and alienation), the loss of future pension and social security entitlements caused by workforce detachment (the care penalty), and the chronic psychological toll

of remaining on perpetual high alert during crises. We therefore call for the rigorous accounting of these multidimensional costs across all policies and projects.

IMPLEMENTATION TOOL
TOOLEarthcare Policy and Intervention Assessment Canvas

To ensure that care ethics does not remain an abstract statement of goodwill, and to concretely assess how a planned climate, energy, water, or urban transformation project affects care relationships, we developed the Earthcare Design and Assessment Canvas. To explore this tool, which evaluates the invisible costs, gender impacts, and degree of experiential participation of interventions, and to implement it in your own projects, please refer to Annex 1.

Annex 1 → Earthcare Climate Policy and Intervention Assessment Canvas

2. Reframing Care with the More-than-Human and Collective Life

Interspecies and More-than-Human Care

We propose transcending boundaries that view care merely as a relationship bounded within the human species. The sustaining of life is possible only through the care we extend to the purity of the air we breathe, the living vitality of the soil, the well-being of animals on the street, and the trees that shade and cool us. We believe this web of interdependence, in which all living and non-living beings rely on one another's care, must be recognized as the foundational ground of climate policies.

Restoring Shared Living Spaces and Public Accessibility

We reject urban planning approaches that reduce parks, urban groves, water basins, coastlines, and public squares merely to technical "green spaces/carbon sinks" or urban commodities to be monetized for real estate rent. We advocate for protecting, restoring, and multiplying these spaces at the neighborhood scale as public commons where no one is excluded during heatwaves and crises, and where free clean water, shade, cooling, and rest are equitably accessible to all.

3. An Equitable Care Responsibility That Transcends Gender Stereotypes

Dismantling the Gendered Division of Labor

We propose that climate adaptation, disaster preparedness, and just transition policies refrain from deepening the existing division of labor that presumes caregiving responsibilities to be the "natural duty" of women. We advocate ensuring that support mechanisms and crisis management strategies do not levy the care burden onto specific groups, and that green employment and transition plans overcome artificial gender divisions between technical and care sectors, enabling care to be shared equitably across households, the public sector, and society as a whole.

Diverse Living Conditions and Intersectional Dimensions

In shaping climate policies, we need to move beyond the assumption of homogeneous "caregiver" and "care-receiver" profiles and embrace multifaceted realities. This requires policy frameworks and regulations that encompass low-income households, rural women and girls, residents of urban peripheries, domestic workers, young caregivers, single parents heading households alone, disabled women and parents, migrant women, the shifting bodily needs across different life stages, and the shared care bonds woven through companion animals, street animals, and neighborhood solidarity networks.

Expanding Care Networks and Collective Solidarity

We must acknowledge that care is not confined strictly to formal family ties and intra-household obligations, but is sustained through alternative support webs established by diverse segments of society based on trust, reciprocity, and shared living. We propose that chosen kinship groups walking side by side, autonomous peer-support networks of disabled persons, and community-based care mechanisms be recognized as legitimate lifelines, and that public policies render these relational networks visible while backing them with institutional services.

4. Incorporating Care Relationships and Lived Experience into Decision-Making Processes

The Practical Wisdom and Adaptive Capacity of Life-Sustainers

Whether caring for a relative at home or tending seeds, water, and animals in the field, we recognize those providing daily care labor not merely as people absorbing the impacts of crisis, but as local actors who generate new survival strategies and practical adaptation solutions under pressure. We propose recognizing these prosumer practices and resilience reflexes, developed to sustain life amid scarcity and disruption, as a foundational body of climate knowledge and grassroots innovation that complements technical modeling.

Positioning Care-Receivers as Decision-Making Subjects, Not Passive Objects of Care

We need to move past framing disabled people, older adults, individuals with chronic illnesses, and small-scale local food growers merely as "vulnerable groups in need of protection" within climate policies. Grounded in the reality that care-receivers best understand which urban infrastructures, early warning systems, or shaded areas are truly functional, we advocate for mechanisms where they articulate their own needs, evaluate proposed solutions, and participate directly in decisions affecting their own lives.

Representation of Care Networks in Governance Mechanisms

Across local climate assemblies, urban planning boards, and disaster coordination platforms, we propose establishing permanent consultative bodies where caregivers, care-receivers, and neighborhood solidarity groups hold a collective voice. We consider their presence at decision-making tables essential, not as passive objects of policy, but as active subjects co-designing local resilience. To this end, before water tariff structures, urban transformation projects, or disaster action plans are enacted, they can be submitted for the experiential review and shared assessment of neighborhood caregivers, disability collectives, and elder councils.

PARTICIPATION TOOL
Care Wisdom Advisory Board

To bring the practical and experiential knowledge of caregivers and care-receivers directly into climate policy decisions, we established the Care Wisdom Advisory Board within İhtimam Derneği. To explore the purpose of this mechanism or to become part of this transformation by contributing your own caregiving or care-receiving experience, please refer to Annex 2.

Annex 2 → Care Wisdom Advisory Board

5. Continuity of Care: Safeguarding Lifelines in the Climate Crisis

Uninterrupted Access and Prioritization of Vital Infrastructures

We recognize disruptions in water, energy, and communications during climate shocks not merely as technical failures, but as the severing of vital lifelines within households and care spaces. We propose that infrastructure supply security policies and outage management protocols be designed with public guarantees that directly protect care relationships, health requirements, and the maintenance of daily life, rather than deferring to market priorities.

Crisis and Early Warning Systems Grounded in Care Networks

We advocate for disaster and climate crisis management to move beyond one-directional technical broadcasts and rely instead on dynamic systems that bring local care relationships and social vulnerabilities into view. We consider it essential that risk assessments and early intervention mechanisms be constructed through participatory care mappings grounded in neighborhood-level care burdens, intra-household dependencies, and solidarity networks.

Public Support and Respite Infrastructures During Crises

We propose planning shared public spaces that prevent care burdens from collapsing onto households and the shoulders of women during extreme weather events. We advocate for establishing neighborhood-scale public support centers that provide clean water, cooling, energy, and rest, thereby preventing caregiver burnout and sustaining collective solidarity as an indispensable component of climate adaptation investments.

5

Limits of Earthcare: Dilemmas, Tensions, and Open Questions

Earthcare is not a flawless framework devised at a desk; it was born from our need to catch our breath, make sense of what is unfolding, and hold onto one another in the midst of crises. Yet in developing this approach, we have by no means found all the answers. On the contrary, the closer we get to the field and to daily life, the more we encounter burning questions for which we cannot extract a single truth, and to which we cannot offer complete answers.

Care is not a rose-tinted realm of unalloyed tenderness; more often than not, it is a continuous effort to navigate scarce resources, conflicting needs, and profound uncertainties. Sometimes, in striving to sustain one life, we may constrict the space of another; we may find ourselves uncertain about how to share limited water or energy, or hit our own limits while trying to do what is best.

For this reason, we treat Earthcare not as a finished model that offers ready-made solutions to every problem, but as an ethical and political framework that allows us to honestly question the impacts of our decisions, the limits of our responsibilities, and the places where we falter. In this section, we open up for collective discussion the contradictions we encounter where climate justice and care intersect in the field, the unresolved tensions, and the open-ended questions that demand our sustained, shared inquiry.

Who Can Represent Non-Human Life?

When decisions are made to protect a wetland, a forest, or a riverbed, who can determine the needs of the birds, fish, and soil living there? While scientific data and local observations offer guidance, no single human or institution possesses the authority to speak exhaustively on behalf of the living world. The open question here is how we can avoid turning non-human beings into mere objects of decision-making, while remaining mindful of the boundaries and epistemic humility required when speaking in their name.

What Do We Do When the Needs of Different Lives Collide?

Situations such as dividing scarce water among households, food production, and river ecosystems during drought, or a wind power plant that lowers emissions while threatening avian migratory flyways, reveal that every need cannot be met simultaneously. Earthcare harbors no illusion that all demands can be reconciled seamlessly. The real debate emerges when protecting one life inevitably constricts the living space of another: who is forced to pay that cost, and how will that responsibility be shared?

How Do We Strike a Balance Between More-than-Human Care and Human Rights?

Interrogating anthropocentrism and tending to multispecies webs of life does not position itself in a way that devalues universal human rights, civic guarantees, or labor rights won through historical struggles. On the contrary, rather than relying on the construct of an abstract, autonomous individual detached from nature, it seeks to strengthen the rights of vulnerable and relational subjects living within concrete material conditions. From access to clean water and adequate housing to a healthy environment and the right to give and receive care, no fundamental right can be suspended by invoking ecological justifications. While recognizing ecological limits, how can we protect human dignity and hard-won rights, conceiving rights-based struggles and Earthcare not as forces that weaken one another, but as vital allies securing each other's very conditions of life?

When Does Care Turn into Control?

The desire to protect someone or an ecosystem can easily slide into the dominance of deciding on their behalf. Treating older adults or disabled individuals merely as "objects in need of protection" within disaster plans curtails their agency over their own lives; similarly, the ambition of placing nature under absolute protection can rest on the hubris that assumes human reason is the sole orchestrator capable of managing everything. How do we safeguard that thin line between the impulses of compassion and protection, and the autonomy and right to subjecthood of others?

How Rigid Is the Divide Between Caregiver and Care-Receiver?

Rigid roles in policy that fix individuals either strictly as "service providers" or as "dependent on services" miss the fluid and porous nature of care. Across the life cycle, everyone both gives and receives care; moreover, a person living with a chronic illness may simultaneously care for a grandchild or street animals in the neighborhood, while disabled people build horizontal peer-support networks among themselves. How can we formulate policies that recognize interdependence, the shifting nature of our vulnerabilities, and the intertwined realities of these roles without locking people into singular, static identities?

More Care, More Labor for Whom?

Growing appeals for neighborhood solidarity and community care during climate crises collide directly with the unequal division of labor on the ground. When stepped in to compensate for systemic deficits in public services, these calls risk intensifying the invisible, uncompensated shifts already carried by overburdened women. As investments in the care economy converge with the green transition, how can we ensure that these interventions dismantle the patterns that reduce care work to the "natural duty" of specific social groups, rather than entrenching them anew?

In Making Care Visible, Do We Reduce It to Measurable Labor?

Bringing care relationships into policy processes requires gathering data and conducting mappings. Yet the trust between neighbors, bonds of affection, or multilayered cycles within an ecosystem cannot be captured merely through time spent or quantitative indicators. Furthermore, attempting to record and track every care relationship risks generating new forms of surveillance and privacy intrusions. In making care visible to decision-making mechanisms, how can we safeguard its relational and emotional dimensions that refuse to be confined to numbers?

How Do We Reconcile the Urgency of the Climate Crisis with the Time Required by Care?

While climate disasters compel rapid and radical decision-making, nurturing relationships, listening to vulnerabilities, and arriving at collective decisions demand time, patience, and slowness. While preventing measures taken under the pressure of urgency from casually writing off the rights of marginalized groups or ecosystems, how can we build a politics of care that maintains the reflex speed required in moments of crisis?

Can Every Harm Be Repaired?

A collapsed building can be rebuilt; water can be reintroduced to a dried-out wetland. Yet an extinct species, lost loved ones, or the erased memory of an uprooted neighborhood cannot be recovered through technical interventions. Frankly acknowledging the limits of repair and the reality of irreparable losses shifts the ethics of care from a basic "damage-control" mechanism into an imperative responsibility to prevent harm before it ever occurs.

Earthcare offers no singular or definitive answers to these questions. Conditions shift; needs and the ramifications of decisions cannot always be fully foreseen.

These uncertainties do not serve as an excuse to evade responsibility. Rather, they stand as vital reminders to honestly interrogate every step we take, recognize whom we might be leaving out, confront emerging harms, and pivot whenever necessary.

6

What Kind of Earth Do We Want to Live in Together?

This guide was born out of our objection to the complete disconnection with which we address crises that deeply reshape one another every single day: the ecological and biodiversity breakdown, the climate crisis, and the care crisis. We set out to bridge these fields, translating the invisible world of care to climate and ecological practitioners, and conveying to care actors how these compounding crises shatter everyday life. In doing so, our goal was to make sense of the fact that we are ultimately speaking to the very same shared concern: the continuity and vulnerability of life.

Looking at the current state of affairs, we confront a twofold impasse: care policies remain constrained within an anthropocentric boundary that excludes ecological conditions and the living beings we share life with, while climate policies render invisible the care labor and infrastructures that actively sustain life. The vital experiential knowledge of caregivers and care-receivers, balancing a patient's blood pressure during extreme heat, standing guard over sanitation during water cuts, or struggling not to leave a companion animal behind during a disaster, remains locked outside policy tables.

To grasp in unison the bonds we weave with ourselves, with the people around us, and with the entire ecosystem we are a part of, we felt the urgent need for a relational approach and named it Earthcare. Earthcare is an ethical and political framework that refuses to view humanity as the master of nature or an autonomous agent, seeing life instead as a multispecies web of care, interdependent and mutually nourishing.

We believe care is neither a social assistance add-on to be tacked onto climate policies after the fact nor a compensatory budget line. Instead, it can serve as a foundational ethical framework introduced at the very initial design stage of every intervention, from water scarcity and park design to the energy transition and disaster preparedness. We advocate that when decisions are made, the invisible bodily and emotional tolls of care must be calculated, the gendered division of labor must not be reinforced, the shared rights of street animals and the soil must be recognized, and life-sustainers must sit directly at the decision-making table.

What kind of Earth we want to live in together will be determined by how we cease concealing our vulnerability and instead extend care to all life-sustaining relationships. We hope this work and the assessment canvas we present provide fertile ground for restorative policies across our cities, river basins, and neighborhoods, policies that leave no living being behind, caring for one another and for the Earth.

7

Earthcare Policy and Implementation Toolkit

Annex 1: Earthcare Climate Policy and Intervention Assessment Canvas

INTERVENTION NAME:

1. The Invisible Costs of Care and Everyday Life

Consider the shifts the designed climate intervention may create in the everyday practices of caregivers.

- Does this intervention generate physical and mental burdens in daily life, such as carrying water in containers, watching outage schedules, or tracking crises, thereby causing caregivers to detach from the workforce and experience losses in income and social security?
- Do service access restrictions or outages create new dimensions of time poverty and precariousness for migrant domestic workers, single parents, people in solidarity with disabled individuals, or rural women?
- Does the proposed restriction, pricing model, or infrastructure measure cut off the access of street animals, birds, urban wildlife, and the soil to water, shade, and the shared commons needed to sustain their life cycles?

Proposed Intervention:

2. Gender Equality and Equitable Sharing of Care Roles

Account for how adaptation, transition, or crisis preparedness measures impact the existing social division of labor and systemic inequalities.

- Do appeals for solidarity in disaster and climate action deepen patterns that treat care responsibilities as the "natural duty" of women, or do they collectivize and publicize care?
- Do support and crisis mechanisms rely solely on formal marriage and biological ties, or do they also embrace solo-living individuals, disabled peer networks, and chosen community solidarities?

Proposed Intervention:

3. Lived Experience and Participation

Evaluate whose voices remain missing at the policy table and how those who actively sustain life are integrated into the process.

- Have the practical field knowledge, needs, and agency of care-receivers and caregivers directly impacted by crises been included in the decision-making process through accessible participation channels?

Proposed Interventio

Annex 1-1: Earthcare Climate Policy and Intervention Assessment Canvas (Sample Application)

MÜDAHALE ADI:
İklim Uyum Planı Kapsamında Akıllı Su Tarifesi ve Kentsel Su Kısıtı Uygulaması

1. The Invisible Costs of Care and Everyday Life

Consider the shifts the designed climate intervention may create in the everyday practices of caregivers.

Proposed Intervention:

An "uninterrupted minimum water quota" exempt from punitive tariff tiers can be designated for households with chronic illnesses, disabilities, or infants; automated watering stations connected to the municipal grid can be installed across parks and public squares to prevent street animals from facing dehydration. To meet sanitation and care needs during water restriction hours, solar-powered free public laundries and purified drinking water stations can be deployed at the neighborhood level.

2. Gender Equality and Equitable Sharing of Care Roles

Account for how adaptation, transition, or crisis preparedness measures impact the existing social division of labor and systemic inequalities.

Proposed Intervention:

Conservation campaigns can be structured not only to focus on individual consumption habits, but also to make visible the water efficiency responsibilities of industry, tourism, and commercial enterprises. In the event of potential disruptions or restrictions, emergency water tankers can be dispatched not merely based on official property records, but by prioritizing older adults living alone, single parents, and households with high care needs as identified by neighborhood head offices and local solidarity networks.

3. Lived Experience and Participation

Evaluate whose voices remain missing at the policy table and how those who actively sustain life are integrated into the process.

Proposed Intervention:

When determining restriction hours and tiered tariff brackets, co-design sessions can be organized with caregivers who actively manage daily water and sanitation needs, patient and disability rights initiatives, and neighborhood representatives. Before proposed tariff and restriction measures take effect, they can be submitted for review and feedback from these assemblies and solidarity networks, ensuring actual consumption patterns directly inform the decisions. These gatherings can be scheduled at hours that do not disrupt care shifts and made fully accessible by offering on-site childcare and accompaniment support for dependents.

Annex 2: Care Wisdom Advisory Board

Experiential Knowledge and Participation Mechanism in Climate and Care Policies

Decisions on climate adaptation, disaster management, and urban transformation are largely shaped through top-down technical modeling and engineering assumptions. At these closed decision-making tables, the vital tactics and practical solutions generated during crises by those caring for disabled individuals, patients, children, or older adults, those dependent on powered medical equipment, or those sustaining neighborhood-scale webs of shared life remain entirely overlooked. Care-receivers are coded merely as "passive objects requiring protection," while caregivers are framed as "invisible self-sacrificers" covering systemic failures with their own bodies. Within İhtimam Association, we designed the Care Wisdom Advisory Board to disrupt this hierarchical lens and transform the situated knowledge arising from care relations into a foundational pillar of climate policy. We established the Board as an enduring platform for advocacy and co-production that channels the experiential wisdom of those who actively sustain life directly into institutional decision-making mechanisms.

- **Documenting Invisible Costs and Needs:** Systematically recording the physical, mental, and temporal burdens imposed on households, care environments, and public streets by extreme heat, water restrictions, power outages, and severe weather events.
- **Providing Experiential Feedback on Policies and Interventions:** Evaluating municipal and public climate action plans, urban design initiatives, and disaster scenarios against actual field needs; utilizing the Assessment Canvas to surface and preemptively illuminate structural risks.
- **Strengthening the Decision-Making Agency of Care-Receivers:** Centering care-receivers at policy tables not as passive recipients of aid, but as equal citizens holding sovereign experiential knowledge of their own bodies, accessibility requirements, and safety during crises.
- **Cultivating Community Solidarity and Vital Safeguards:** Embedding shared life practices that extend beyond formal family structures into climate and disaster frameworks, actively encompassing neighborhood ties, grassroots solidarity networks, peer support, and co-inhabiting urban animals.

Join the Care Wisdom Advisory Board

This board is not a closed panel of technocrats; it is a shared space open to anyone who sustains life every day through their labor, attention, and relationships. Whether you care for a dependent (a child, an elder, a patient), navigate the city and environmental crises through your own bodily and accessibility needs, or care for the street animals and urban greens in your neighborhood, the labor you dedicate, the solutions you forge, and the barriers you confront serve as the ultimate compass for climate policy. If you want the experiential knowledge you carry as a caregiver or care-receiver to be heard at decision-making tables, you can participate in board gatherings and co-create this pathway with us.

To explore the İhtimam Ecosystem → ihtimam.org/en-ecocystem-building
To join the Care Wisdom Advisory Board → tally.so/r/M11bQp

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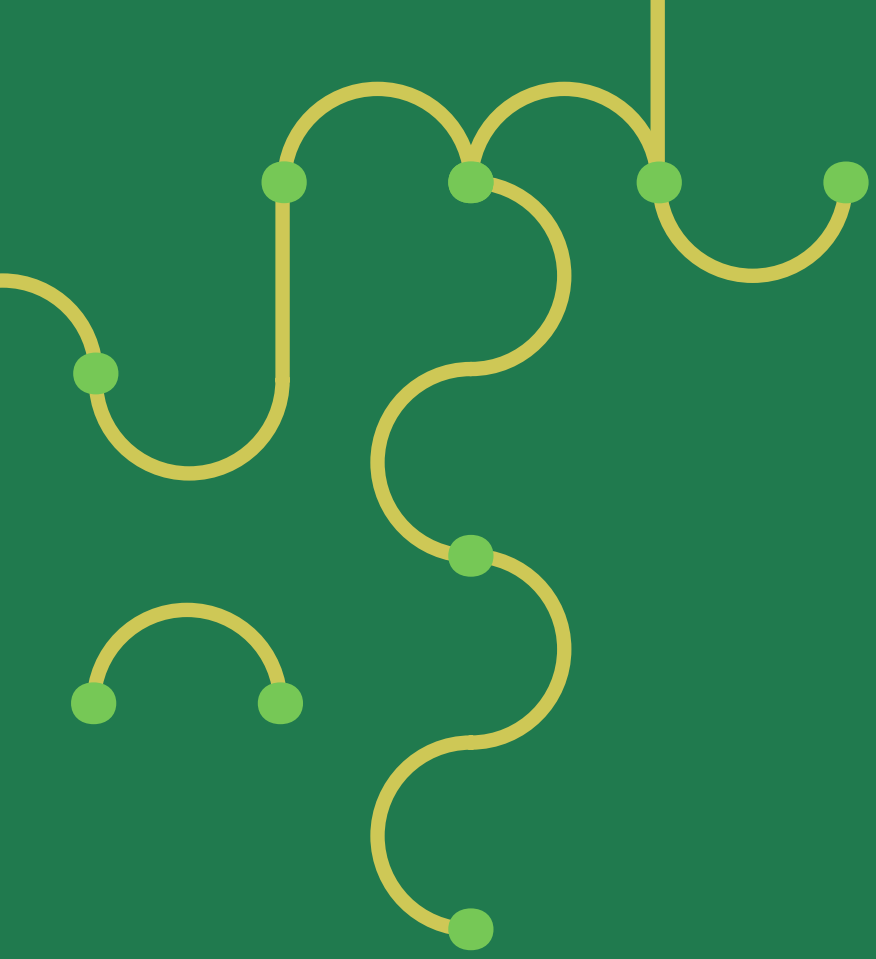
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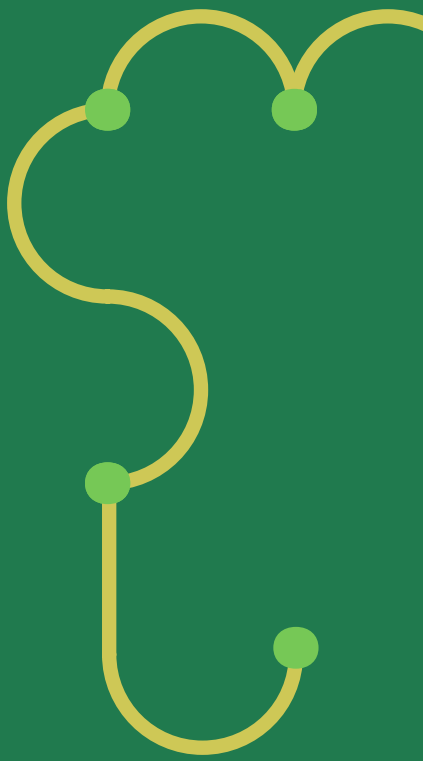
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