

act as the main social protection providers, substituting for the lack of adequate social security systems, public infrastructure and services. This has detrimental effects on maternal and newborn health, families' economic security and gender equality. The progressive establishment of national social protection floors offers a promising framework for recognizing, valuing and supporting unpaid care work by extending contributory and non-contributory child and maternity benefits and comprehensive social care services to the most excluded. Minimum social security guarantees should include adequate prenatal, childbirth and postnatal health care and income security for women during the last weeks of pregnancy and the first weeks after delivery. Access to affordable and quality social care services, and in particular childcare, is an essential social protection measure to reduce poverty and inequality and promote gender equality. These services are also essential to promote transition to formal work, when they are designed and implemented taking into account informal workers' specific vulnerabilities,

capacities and needs, including in terms of the location, duration, opening hours and cost of the service and the need for complementary services targeting children (nutrition, health care and education).

Innovative social protection programmes in middle- and low-income countries, such as cash transfers and employment guarantee schemes, have enormous gender-transformative potential when they explicitly aim to reduce women's unpaid care work and promote the equal sharing of care responsibilities between women and men. Public support should also aim to lighten the burden deriving from the family responsibilities of workers. These efforts should include the creation of formal, quality and qualified jobs in the care sector, including home-help and home-care services with decent working conditions; the provision of basic infrastructure and community services, such as roads, public transport, supply of water and energy in rural areas; and increased access to low-cost, labour-saving technologies to reduce girls' and women's unpaid work in food-processing and farm-related activities.