

Terms of Reference

National Assessment on Provision of Care Services through Cooperatives and Other Social Solidarity Economy Entities and Background Study on Home-based and Community-based Care Workers

Background

Care services, including home-based and community-based care, are vital for families requiring childcare, elderly care, and support for persons with disabilities. In Sri Lanka, the demand for care services is rising due to demographic shifts, labour migration, and this demand is decreasing women's labour force participation, which is at a worrying low of 32 per cent. However, accessible, affordable, and professional care services remain scarce, especially outside urban areas.

While everyone should have the right to care and to be cared for, when in need, globally, informal care workers—many of them women—lack social protection, fair wages, and job security, reinforcing economic and gender disparities. The COVID-19 pandemic further exposed these vulnerabilities, highlighting the need for sustainable and equitable care solutions. In Sri Lanka, home-based and community-based care workers often operate informally, facing poor working conditions, minimal legal protections, and limited access to decent work opportunities in the care economy. Addressing these challenges requires recognition, formalization, skill development, and stakeholder collaboration. The International Labour Organization (ILO) produced a study on the care economy in Sri Lanka which underscores its role as a major employment generator, a driver of social well-being.

Supporting home-based and community-based care provision is essential to promoting gender equality at work and economic inclusion. Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) entities, including care cooperatives, are increasingly recognized globally as one key solution to the care economy's challenges. With values of social justice, equity, democracy, and decent work for all, cooperatives, and other entities in SSE have emerged as an innovative solution to the care crisis (ILO, 2016; 2017) and important vehicles of the *ILO's 5R Framework for Decent Care Work* the ILO road map to *recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work and reward and represent care workers* (ILO, 2018).

In this context, the ILO aims to implement a two-pronged approach to guide policy reforms and practical initiatives that promote decent work in Sri Lanka's care economy.

- **Part A** will focus on producing an assessment report analysing the current landscape of and potential for care service provision through **Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) entities including care cooperatives** in Sri Lanka. This will include identifying existing models, challenges, opportunities, and the policy environment that influences SSE-led care services
 - **Part B** will focus on developing a **background report on home-based and community-based care workers** with the information gathered in Part A. This report will provide insights into their working conditions, access to social protection, and the role of SSE entities in improving their livelihoods. It will provide recommendations and serve as a key resource for guiding policies and initiatives aimed at promoting decent work in the care sector in Sri Lanka.
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Objectives

The International Labour Organization (ILO) seeks to hire an organization with expertise in cooperatives, gender and care economy, particularly care cooperatives and SSE entities, to deliver Part A and Part B described above.

Part A: To produce a comprehensive assessment report on care service provision through SSE entities including care cooperatives:

The assessment will identify the existence, distribution, and services provided by SSE entities including care cooperatives (e.g., childcare, elderly care, care for people with disabilities), and examine the legal and procedural requirements for forming and registering cooperatives and other SSE entities. This includes compliance with relevant regulations (e.g., National Child Protection Authority rules for childcare, formal training requirements, membership thresholds, and registration duration). Where care workers are organized, these entities will be analyzed, and where not, the study will explore their potential to form cooperatives or other SSE entities, including the challenges and opportunities involved. The study should provide recommendations on priority geographical locations for initiating care cooperatives or SSEs, the types of care services to be prioritized, and the support structures or existing mechanisms that could facilitate the formation of care cooperatives or the expansion of care services.

Part B: To develop a background study report on home-based and community-based care workers to inform policy formation to bring about decent work in the care economy

A background study on care workers who provide home-based care and or provide care services in community-based care entities will be conducted to identify trends, challenges, opportunities, and strategies for promoting decent work in the care economy. This study will build on the findings of [*Care Economy and Decent Work in Sri Lanka: Opportunities, Challenges, and Future Trends*](#), as well as the Sri Lanka Country Brief from the ILO Care at Work report.

Scope of Work

Part A: Assessment of the Care Cooperative & SSE Ecosystem in Sri Lanka

The implementer will analyze the current landscape and potential for care service provision through Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) entities, including care cooperatives. It will begin with a desk review of relevant literature, policies, and international best practices, followed by mapping the legal and regulatory requirements for establishing and operating care cooperatives. The assessment will identify key stakeholders, including domestic worker organizations, government agencies, donor programs, training institutions, and civil society groups that support SSE entities in the care sector.

Key informant interviews and focus group discussions will provide insights into existing care cooperatives, their challenges, and opportunities for scaling up SSE-led care services. The study will also explore potential geographical areas for piloting cooperative models and assess barriers to cooperative formation. Based on these findings, three care cooperative models with potential business and operational structures will be developed, along with recommendations for establishing new cooperatives or strengthening existing ones. The assessment findings will be validated through a stakeholder workshop, ensuring alignment with ground realities and refining key recommendations for implementation.

Part B: Background Study on Home-Based & Community-Based Care Workers

This section will provide a situation analysis of the working conditions, social protection access, skill gaps, occupational and other needs and organization levels of home-based and community-based care workers.

Building on findings from Part A, it will examine employment conditions, income stability, and existing gaps in labour protections for care workers. The study will also assess the role of SSE entities, including cooperatives and associations, in improving the livelihoods and rights of care workers and the challenges they face in organizing.

The findings will inform policy and programmatic recommendations to enhance decent work conditions, increase social protection coverage, and strengthen SSE engagement in the care sector. A final background report will be developed as a key resource for policymakers and stakeholders, guiding future initiatives to promote sustainable and inclusive care service models. The study's conclusions will be validated through a workshop (during the same validation workshop for Part A), ensuring that recommendations align with the needs of care workers and relevant stakeholders.

Reporting

The implementer will report to the Country Director of ILO CO for Sri Lanka and National Project Coordinator of RBSA Project, Sri Lanka and technically work under the direct supervision of the Enterprise Development Specialist of DWT/CO-New Delhi, ILO's Decent Work Team for South Asia.

Methodology

The study will employ a **mixed-methods approach**, including:

1. **Desk Review** – Analyzing relevant literature, reports, and policy documents related to cooperatives, the care economy, and the informal sector in Sri Lanka.
2. **Key Informant Interviews & Focus Group Discussions** – Engaging stakeholders such as government representatives, cooperative leaders and members, trade unions, NGOs, and care workers (with a focus on women, youth, and marginalized groups).
3. **Field Study** – Conducting site visits in priority areas with significant numbers of domestic and community-based care workers to gather first-hand insights.

Deliverables

The assignment is expected to be completed within **4 months**, with the following key deliverables:

Deliverables:

1. **Inception Report** – Outlining the study's methodology, timeline, and action plan (inclusive of both Part A and B)
 2. **Draft Care COOP/SSE Ecosystem Assessment Report** (including the recommendation for possible business models for operationalization) (Part A)
 3. **Draft Background study report** on rapid situation analysis of care workers providing home-based care and community-based care (Part B)
 4. **Slides deck** with key findings of the assessment for validation workshop (Part A)
 5. **Slides deck** with key findings and recommendations of the background study for the validation workshop (Part B)
 6. **Final outputs revised after the validation workshop:**
 - a) Care COOP/SSE Ecosystem Assessment Report
 - b) Background study report
 - c) Slide decks for Part A and B
 - d) Assessment summary developed
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Timeline

The overall duration of this assignment will be 4 months, expected to commence on April 15, 2025. The following table outlines the expected timeline for key activities:

Task	Suggested No. of Working Days divided between different experts	Suggested timeline
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Briefing with the ILO focal points and relevant country staff members Desk Review of programme related documents Identification of stakeholders Inception report / work plan developed (including list of questions for stakeholders and work plan) 	7	April 15-30
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews with key stakeholders and 4-5 focus group discussions (towards gathering inputs for the assessment and the background study on home-based and community-based care workers) 	7	April 30- May 15
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possible models for operationalization of the care coop/SSE models developed 	4	May 15 -25
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research and Drafting of assessment report Develop background study report on home-based and community -based care workers 	18	May 25- June 15
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review by ILO team Circulate draft report to stakeholders Consolidate comments of stakeholders (internal ILO and any external stakeholders) – facilitated by ILO 		June 15- July 04
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop slide decks for Part A and Part B Validation Workshop (organized by ILO) 	3	July 04- July 08
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalize the reports incorporating comments from ILO, validation workshop and stakeholders 	4	July 07- July 16
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final review by ILO team 		July 16 – Aug 1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalization of the part A and part B reports based on the review and preparation of assessment summary Finalize the slide decks incorporating the revisions to the two reports Finalization of the reports (ready for print by ILO) 	4	August 1-15

Note: Gender issues shall be explicitly addressed throughout the activities of all tasks within the consultant's responsibilities and all final reports shall mainstream gender.

Payment:

The implementer will receive payments in three instalments

- 30% of the total upon the submission of deliverable 1
- 40% of the total upon the submission of deliverable 2-5
- 30% of the total upon the submission of deliverable 6

Qualifications & Experience:

The implementing organization should have a strong research team that

- demonstrate sufficient experience, expertise and knowledge on conducting similar kind of studies in the past
- possess advanced degrees in social sciences, economics, business administration, or related fields.
- demonstrate familiarity with cooperatives and SSE entities, particularly in the context of care work and gender equality.
- relevant professional experience in cooperative/SSE development, social and economic development or related fields.
- have strong analytical and writing skills in English.
- Possess strong communication and interpersonal skills, with the ability to effectively engage diverse stakeholders in English and local languages.

Working modality:

The implementer is expected to work remotely with frequent visits to the ILO and the field as the assignment requires. The ILO will not be responsible to provide any IT equipment or cover internet access required for the assignment. Travel within the country and other cost related to the assignment should be captured and reflected in the financial offer

Application Process

Interested applicants should submit the following:

1. **The Organization Profile** (max. 1 page) explaining suitability for the assignment.
 2. **Relevant Experience, including brief profiles of the research team members** (max. 3 pages), including past research on labour markets or social protection.
 3. **Proposed Methodology, Deliverables, and Work Plan** (max. 5 pages).
 4. **Financial Proposal** –inclusive break-down of all costs (including KII/FDG costs/travel, as needed)
 5. **If you need any clarification before submitting the proposal, please contact Ms Marian Fernando (fernandoma@ilo.org) National Project Coordinator for Care Project at least one week before the final date for submission.**
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Submission Deadline: Applications should be sent to cmb-finance@ilo.org no later than **4 April 2025 (with a subject: Assessment Care Cooperatives & Community Based Care Workers)**
