

A City That Cares

Cross-Agency Innovation to Support Caregivers in Bogotá

Epilogue

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By the end of Mayor Claudia López's term,¹ she and Secretary of Women's Affairs Diana Rodríguez had rolled out twenty-one Care Blocks, coordinating more than a dozen city agencies to co-locate free services for caregivers and those they cared for.¹ (See Appendix 1 for an overview of services provided.) Bogotá's care system had made headlines across the globe and won multiple prizes. "We made [the care system] famous," said Claudia Rincón Caicedo, communications director for Women's Affairs under Mayor López.² Lauded as an international model for "innovation in gender-related public policy," the care system inspired similar initiatives in cities across Colombia and in other countries including Brazil, Chile, and Sierra Leone.³ Laura Tami Leal, a legal advisor for Women's Affairs who took over Rodríguez's role under López's successor, Carlos Fernando Galán, noted that every mayoral candidate had pledged to sustain the Care Blocks during the 2023 mayoral race.⁴ "More than an electoral coincidence," said Ana María Buriticá, who managed strategic alliances for Women's Affairs under the Galán administration, "this consensus reflects the strength of the program in the city and the political conviction for maintaining it as a local government policy that protects and recognizes the rights of caregivers."⁵

Measuring Impact

Women's Affairs spent much of 2022 working to improve the care system's data collection policies and processes. A key issue early on was that the service-providing entities did not have a means to share information with one another to accurately calculate how many unique caregivers had utilized services. Rodríguez explained, "At the beginning, we could not say how many individuals had been served. We would know how many services were provided, but we could not just add the number of users who attended because there was a risk of double-counting [people who used multiple services]."⁶

Each entity had its own data systems and reporting methods. For instance, when the Secretary of the Environment engaged caregivers in a tree-planting initiative, Women's Affairs received data about the trees rather than the participants. When partners did share information about participants, the data often lacked demographic details to help the administration understand where to target outreach efforts. Natalia Moreno, who was responsible for establishing systems for collecting and sharing data as Care System Director from 2020 until early 2022, explained: "There were many ways of reporting

¹ In Bogotá, mayors may serve only one four-year term.

information that were not uniform. An accountability agent would arrive and say, ‘Well, mayor, how many people are coming to the Care Blocks, and of those how many are women, how many are men, from which localities?’ And we could not answer with the consistency or reliability that a uniform reporting system would provide.”⁷

Women’s Affairs developed a questionnaire to gather more detailed data, but this burdened service providers and recipients alike, undermining the care system’s goal of reducing time poverty for caregivers. “Women had to fill out thirty-five demographic variables every time they got a service,” said iBO Public Innovation Lab of Bogotá Director Angela Reyes, who led a team that partnered with the Bloomberg Center for Public Innovation at Johns Hopkins University to work on the data collection problem.⁸ Reyes also noted that caregivers receiving services were sometimes asked to disclose sensitive personal information without knowing how it would be used, and that Women’s Affairs did not have sufficient staff or mature systems in place to analyze data. The innovation team piloted a registration system that allowed caregivers to complete a one-time questionnaire and receive a personalized ID with a QR code, which service providers could scan to track participation.ⁱⁱ

According to Diana Rodríguez, the pilot “helped shed light into some of the problems we were having,” but it was not ultimately scaled up. Instead, service providers established data-sharing agreements to enable an interoperable data collection system. Using unique identifiers, such as a caregiver’s state ID number or email address, the system allowed the administration to count each user once. With this approach, López could confidently report at the end of her term that the care system had served more than 546,500 caregivers and family members, and nearly 36,000 caregivers had advanced their education, earning diplomas and certifications or completing career training.⁹

Sustainability and Expansion

López and her team had taken early measures to ensure the continuity of the care system beyond her term, including plans for a total of forty-five Care Blocks by 2035 in the city’s master urban plan for land use—the first such plan enacted since 2000.¹⁰ In 2023, city council unanimously passed a local law to guarantee the care system, further cementing care as a key component of Lopez’s legacy. But it was not all smooth sailing into the next administration. A 2024 audit noted that the care system had struggled with suspension of services—including a “temporary” interruption in Care Bus operations that stretched to nineteen months—and personnel loss due to “contingencies.”¹¹ The Home Care Assistance program won a Global Mayor’s Challenge award of one million dollars, which funded two pilot programs that ran from 2023 to 2025. These refined and augmented earlier iterations of Home Care Assistance, providing key legal services, caregiver certification, and cultural transformation workshops for caregivers and families alongside in-home services focused on boosting the independence of people with disabilities.ⁱⁱⁱ Although both the Care Buses and the Home Care

ⁱⁱ The pilot yielded significant reductions in service providers’ data entry time and offered caregivers a membership badge that boosted solidarity and pride in their caregiver status. See Emma Miner and Francisca M. Rojas, *Public Innovation: Digital Transformation for the Care Blocks in Bogotá*, Bloomberg Center for Public Innovation at Johns Hopkins University, April 2024, <https://publicinnovation.jhu.edu/resources/case-study-digital-transformation-care-blocks-bogota/>.

ⁱⁱⁱ The Home Care Assistance pilots were time-limited (ten or twelve weeks) but documented significant improvements in caregivers’ self-care and emotional wellbeing, individuals with disabilities’ autonomy and cognition, and the number of

Assistance program ran as pilot programs, they were critical for expanding access to the care system services.¹² While Care Buses relaunched in November of 2025, care system partners were still working to land on a viable version of Home Assistance within budgetary constraints.

The Care Blocks, however, continued to operate and expand. Mayor Galán aimed to have thirty-one Care Blocks in operation by the end of his term.¹³ As of October 2025, there were twenty-five, with two more set to open by the end of the year.¹⁴ Galán’s approach to the care system emphasized “strategies for cultural transformation fostering behavioral change; the redistribution, recognition, and reduction of care work; the prevention of violence; and the change of stereotypes and roles that limit the exercise of women’s rights. . .”¹⁵ As part of these efforts, the new administration announced a “mobile services strategy” to bring simultaneous services to caregivers studying at universities and a “community care strategy” to support “forms of collective care emerging from the city’s social, neighborhood, rural, and community organizations.”¹⁶ Women’s Affairs debuted a public dashboard to share data on services provided and the demographics of recipients. By fall 2025, the care system had provided close to seven million services to over 900,000 individuals.¹⁷

Still, Secretary of Women’s Affairs Laura Tami Leal acknowledged that further political work was needed to ensure the care system’s sustainability: “We can create the infrastructure and the legal basis for the system’s continuation, but without the political interest, the system won’t continue. My biggest challenge is consolidating this program so that it is part of this city and we’re not anxious about who’s coming next who might do away with it.”¹⁸ Despite Galán’s commitment to supporting the system, some felt that having a male mayor pulled energy from the effort and the discourse around care work: “I think it matters who embodies the message, who is there all the time hammering the theme so that the program grows,” said Rincón Caicedo, communications director for Women’s Affairs under López.

The Galán administration talked about the need for culture change, but challenging traditional gender stereotypes and behaviors and persuading men to embrace caregiving alongside women remained a complex, long-term challenge: “I think there was not enough time,” said Blanca Durán, who served as director of recreation and sports under López.¹⁹ “It was started, but these changes are not of one administration. In hindsight, we needed a big cultural movement for caregiving women the way we have for LGBTQ issues.” Durán pointed out that the number of physical activity instructors in the Blocks had dropped significantly under Galán, a loss that she felt would have led to protests from a more organized network of caregivers.

Even without this kind of grassroots mobilization, however, the question of how to recognize, reduce, and redistribute care gained traction across Colombia. In 2023, a new Ministry of Equality and Equity under Vice President Francia Márquez began laying the foundation for a national care system grounded in the right to not only receive care but also “provide care in dignified conditions, and to recognize and strengthen communal ways of caregiving.”²⁰

In practice, the initiative included services similar to those offered in Bogotá, such as the creation of homemaking classes for men and the launch of “care routes”—which used vehicles to deliver integrated daycare, educational programs, and psychological support for caregivers in remote areas for

participating families who believed care should be shared. See Bloomberg Philanthropies Mayors Challenge, *In-Home Assistance Program: Simultaneous in-home services for caregivers and their loved ones with disabilities*, 2025.

months at a time.²¹ It also expanded the care system's vision to honor and support collective approaches to caregiving in Indigenous and other historically marginalized communities outside Colombia's urban centers. According to Moreno, who was tapped to direct the national care system, the goal was for "cultural practices of collective care to continue, but with the support of the State."²²

The national care system also provided a basis for future policies that were beyond the scope of Bogotá's efforts, such as subsidies for women heads of households or those who care for people with disabilities, and liaising with the Ministry of Labor to help ensure that households respect the labor rights of caregivers.²³ In a speech urging the Inter-American Court of Human Rights to establish a right to care, Márquez explained: "We must create a society of care that transforms the existing society of fear, insecurity, and militarization. [. . .] In Colombia, we are understanding care as a pillar of the individual and collective well-being of our society."²⁴

Appendices

Appendix 1 Care System Services by Agency

Care Blocks



- 1 Caregivers
- 2 Children and adolescents
- 3 Elderly people
- 4 People with disabilities
- 5 Men and families

Social Integration	Health	Women's Affairs	Education	Culture
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Community laundry facilities 2 Leisure activities 2 Art of Taking Care of You, for children 2 Comprehensive care for children and adolescents at risk of child labor 2 Early childhood center 2 Care for children under three years of age 4 Comprehensive care for children with disabilities 4 Art of Taking Care of You, for children with disabilities 3 Creating opportunities for elderly people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 2 3 4 General medicine and nursing 1 4 Home visits and community groups for mental health 1 3 Actions to promote care practices and healthy lifestyle habits 1 3 4 Delivery of medications, laboratory tests, and rapid psychotherapy (at home) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Supplementary training (office software, English, skills certification) 1 Psychosocial guidance 1 Legal guidance and advice 5 Cultural transformation workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Flexible education (to finish high school) 1 Socio-occupational guidance workshops 2 School reinforcement (children and adolescents) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 Calm Program: Care School for Men and Calm Line 5 Reading cycles (reading and discussion groups) <h3 style="background-color: #e91e63; color: white; padding: 2px;">Sports & Recreation</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Physical Activity for Caregivers (yoga, dance) 1 2 5 Bicycle School 3 Physical Activity for elderly people

IDARTES (District Institute for the Arts)	Habitat (Housing and Urban Planning)	Economic Development	Environment	Animal Protection and Welfare
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 NIDOS program: artistic experiences for early childhood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Financial education and inclusion workshops (advice on buying a home) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Entrepreneurship and formalization path 1 Employment path <h3 style="background-color: #395468; color: white; padding: 2px;">Tourism</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 "Ownership" tours of city in prioritized locations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Environmental management of natural resources as a strategy for solidarity <h3 style="background-color: #8bc34a; color: white; padding: 2px;">Botanical Garden</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Urban agriculture 1 Nature therapy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Sterilization campaigns 1 Veterinary brigades 1 Self-care workshops for caregivers and pet care 1 "Look but don't touch" (wild animal education)

Care Buses

- 1 Caregivers
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Social Integration	Sports and Recreation	Education	Health	Economic Development	Habitat (Housing and Urban Planning)	Women's Affairs
<p>2 Art of Taking Care of You</p> <p>5 Bogotá supports you in your old age</p> 	<p>1 Physical activity for caregivers</p> <p>5 Physical activity for elderly people</p> <p>4 Physical activity for people with disabilities</p> 	<p>1 Flexible education</p> <p>1 Socio-occupational guidance workshops</p> <p>2 School reinforcement for children and adolescents</p> 	<p>1 3 Prevention and promotion of collective health</p> 	<p>1 Entrepreneurship and formalization path</p> <p>1 Employment path</p> 	<p>1 Financial education and inclusion workshops</p> 	<p>1 Complementary training</p> <p>1 Psychosocial guidance</p> <p>1 Legal guidance and advice</p> <p>5 Cultural transformation workshops</p> 



Source: Comisión Intersectorial del Sistema Distrital de Cuidado, https://manzanasdelcuidado.gov.co/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/acta-No15-comis-inter-SIDICU-11-01-24_.pdf, accessed November 21, 2025. Translated and revised for accessibility.

Endnotes

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