

Concept note
Advocacy for the “Recognition of women’s unaccounted work in National GDP”
(Empowerment of Women & girls to live with dignity and free from violence)
Manusher Jonno Foundation

Advocacy Background:

Non-recognition of women’s unpaid work is devaluing their contribution and resulting in discrimination and violence against them. It is high time to right the wrong and injustice that have continued for decades. Over the period of time Manusher Jonno Foundation has observed and identified that the lack of recognition of women’s unaccounted work contributes to continued subordination of their position in the family and society. However, it should be noted that it is the unaccounted work of women, both productive and reproductive, that underpins society’s well-being, social development and economic growth. Which is also evident by a research “Estimating Women’s contribution to the economy: The case of Bangladesh conducted by MJF-CPD.

In this background MJF believes that violence and discrimination against women will be reduced if they have higher status in the family and society. So, MJF launched a campaign “Equality through Dignity” and initiated an advocacy “to recognize women’s unaccounted work in National GDP”. Gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls is a universal policy goal and a systematic approach to mainstreaming gender at all levels that will spur progress of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Overall objectives: Inclusion of women’s unaccounted work in GDP

Specific objectives (as part of process)

1. To identify the gap between policy objectives and realities for better use of allocated gender responsive budget and reallocate budget against on women’s unpaid care work as a part of practical gender needs.
2. To create gender accountability and implementation on gender budgeting in a target way to address strategic gender needs.
3. To aware mass population mainly young about women’s contribution and change their attitude towards them at family, society and thereby reduce violence and discrimination against them.

The National Action Plan 2012 specifies actions against the objectives of recognizing women’s contributions through work (formal and informal sector) to socio-economic development; ensuring accurate reflection of their contribution in national statistics; and taking into account agricultural and home-based labour of women in calculating national development and economic growth. It also identifies the ministries responsible (Finance, Planning, Bureau of Statistics, MOWCA, Local Government, Information, Commerce, Labour and Employment) for ensuring calculation of sex disaggregated data, providing statistics on the economic contribution through unpaid work of rural and urban women, evaluating and including the monetary valuation of women’s agricultural and household work in all national accounts and informing public of women’s economic contribution through mass media.

However in reality women’s unpaid work which is both productive and reproductive is not evaluated or recognized and therefore does not get the recognition it deserves.

Rational:

Why do we need to focus on women’s unaccounted work in policy?

The non-recognition of women’s contribution to the economy through unpaid work, neglects the implications for women’s empowerment and gender equality. Women and girls across *all* societies

undertake the bulk of unpaid work, almost three times more than men. Despite substantive increases in female labour force participation in many contexts in Bangladesh.

The socially ascribed responsibility of household responsibilities undermines women and girls' rights and opportunities and limits their capabilities and choices. Being time consuming, arduous and undervalued, unpaid work reinforces gender inequalities, particularly among people living in poverty who cannot afford paid care, by impinging upon girls' education, restricting opportunities for paid work, putting women at greater risk of gender-based violence and limiting women's political participation (Esplen 2009)¹.

- According to recent census there will be a sizable aging population in future which means that the demand and need for unpaid care work will increase.
- Increase in nuclear households in rural and urban areas would mean that extended family members will not be present to provide unpaid care.
- Rapid urbanization coupled with changes in family structure will lead to an increased demand for care work for the-children, the elderly, and the disabled.
- Increased migration by women and their labor force participation in formal and informal sector translate into women having less time for unpaid care work at home.
- Increased labor force participation of women from poorer households without community and state support for unpaid care translates into young girls staying at home having to take up household responsibilities. This may reduce the young girls' ability to attend school and participate in other capacity building activities.
- In order to sustain the gains of women's economic empowerment through participation in formal and informal sector economy their care needs have to be addressed.
- Women's unpaid work burden increases during times of economic crisis as families and poor households try to sustain themselves through expenditure saving measures. These measures largely stretch women's unpaid work burden. Meeting the needs of socially vulnerable groups during crisis requires a focus and comprehensive strategy.
- The absence of these young migrant women from households has some impact on the care of parents or older people, and of younger siblings for whom older sisters have been responsible in the past.
- Women will continue to be trapped in informal employment if there is no recognition, reduction or redistribution of unpaid work. This can only add to their drudgery without adequate remuneration, security or rights, and they will remain excluded from the rights and benefits that accrue to workers (mostly male) in the formal sector, being outside the purview of the Labour Law (ILO 2013).
- If governments do not measure women's unpaid work they cannot assess its contribution and impact on the different segments of society and on the economy.

Present status in policies/laws:²

The findings from the review reveal that unpaid care work has primarily featured in a limited way, and mostly as background noise both at the research and policy level in Bangladesh.

¹ Esplen, E. (2009) *Gender and Care: Overview Report*, BRIDGE Cutting Edge Pack, Brighton: IDS

² IDS WORKING PAPER Volume 2015 No 452, Unpaid Care Work in Bangladesh: Policies, Practice and Evidence Lopita Huq ,March 2015

- In policy documents, women’s unpaid care work is mentioned in explaining gender roles in Bangladesh, but specific policy prescriptions for reduction and redistribution of care work are few
- Existing labour legislation focuses on women in formal sector employment and their child care needs, but ignores other care needs and the needs of women in informal sector employment
- Few policies on education and social protection specifically prescribe policy and programmatic support for women’s reproductive work
- The overall emphasis on unpaid care work has decreased over time in various Government plans and policy documents related to women
- However some new spaces may be opening up at policy levels for the inclusion of unpaid care (e.g. the National Action Plan for Women) and related consultative processes that are important for bringing about a focus on unpaid care.
- Out of the five policies reviewed under Early Childhood Development in Bangladesh, only one, namely the Primary Education Development Programme II (PEDP II) recognised the care work provided by older siblings to younger ones and set up ‘baby classes’ to address the issue.
- Of the nine social protection programmes reviewed, only the Rural Employment Opportunities for Public Assets (REOPA) programme revealed provision for maternity leave and consideration of other household and reproductive responsibilities in their programme for promoting women’s participation in project activities.
- The absence of any discourse around care, particularly in the social protection policies, which have obvious direct links to the issue, gives an indication of the extent of its exclusion from policy debates.

Example settings: From Nepal, India and Mexico

Nepal:³

On recognition:

Nepal’s Sixth Development Plan (2011–2015) recognises unpaid care work, while 2020 BS (Nepal’s civil code) recognises that childcare should not be the sole responsibility of the mother: ‘If a woman cannot and does not want to take to her child, it is the legal duty of father to take care of the child’.

Additionally, the *Disabled Persons Protection and Welfare Act, 2039*, the *Children’s Act, 2048* and the *Senior Citizen Act 2058* state that it is the family’s legal obligation to provide the disabled, young and elderly with care.

On reduction:

The Labour Act 2048 has provisions relating to children, which states that an organisation having 50 or more female workers should establish day care centres for meeting the childcare needs of working mothers. Additionally, the provision of a trained nurse, including some necessary toys, shall also be arranged for these children. However, there is no proper monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of gender-responsive budgets, which would determine if this money is being spent on women’s capacity building purposes.

On redistribution:

Under the Education for All National Plan Action (2001–2015), there are three types of Early Child Development (ECD) programmes: school-based, community-based and home-based child development

³ Unpaid Care Work Programme: Nepal Progress Report (2012–13), evidence no 54, 2014

programmes. Under the *Income Tax Act 2058* they have to pay VAT for their services, whereas in other countries these fees are waived. Committee (VDC) infrastructure development that would reduce the drudgery of unpaid care work, officers do not actually dispense these funds to women.

While the government of Nepal has policy provisions for ECD, usually only children aged three or older are eligible. Community Child Care Centres, on the other hand, can have children from as young as six months. There is therefore a need to advocate for ECDs to include children younger than three years.

INDIA:⁴

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, New Delhi, India conducted a survey to quantify the value of unpaid activities of women and implemented in Meerut district of Uttar Pradesh. The aim of the household satellite is to provide an overall picture of the productive activities undertaken by households and to give an estimate of the value of household production. Small part of this production is covered by SNA, the core national accounts, but most of it is not. Satellite accounts are compatible with the logic of national accounting, yet completely separate from national accounts.

Where SNA recognizes that household production is a part of economic activity in a general sense.

Households produce goods and services quite similar as produced in market economy.

Mexico:⁵

- The National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) has developed since 2011, the Unpaid Work of Households Satellite Account of Mexico (CSTNRHM), in order to provide information on the economic valuation of unpaid work that women and men household members made. It shows the importance of unpaid work in consumption and wellbeing of the population.
- The results of this satellite account⁶ highlights the analysis elements for shaping public policy and decision-making on gender equity, consumption and household expenditure, the total work load including care of children, the elderly, and sick. , It also includes productive work such as home schooling,?

Conclusion:

Time use studies or satellite survey should be introduced and incorporated into household surveys to assess the importance of unpaid work.. Schemes should be tested to see whether they recognise, reduce or redistribute care work, and whether they increase or decrease the drudgery involved in women's unpaid care work. Policymakers should identify and support the needs of substitute caregivers. Unpaid care work has been more or less ignored or seen as an obstacle and not generally perceived to be a contribution to the economy. If it has been addressed at all in policy or in research, the issue of unpaid care work has mostly been raised as a background to or in relation to paid work. Furthermore, there has to be a change in patriarchal attitudes that dominate how women's work is perceived and valued both at the societal as well as the policy level.

⁴ Qualifying the value of unpaid activities of women , central Statistics organization, under the Ministry of statistics and Program Implementation , New Delhi

⁵ Implementation of the Unpaid Work of Households Satellite Account of Mexico: The scheme of time and economic valuation, 2011

⁶Eurostat, "Household Production and Consumption: Proposal for a Methodology of Household Satellite Accounts", Eurostat, 2003.